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BUT IT STILL GOES ON

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MRS. FISHER: OR THE FUTURE OF HUMOUR	*Kegan Paul*
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BUT IT STILL GOES ON

An Accumulation

BY

ROBERT GRAVES

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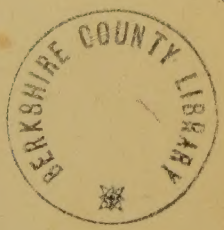

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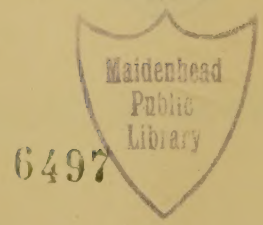

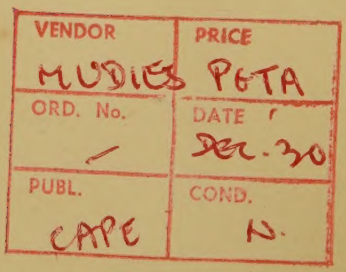

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FOREWORD

This book must be read rather as an appendix than as a progressive sequel to my recent autobiography; for indeed I promised myself at the end of it 'no more anecdotes.' The simple anecdotes of 'Old Papa Johnson' and 'Avocado Pears,' with those surrogatory ones contained in 'The Shout' and in the play 'But it Still Goes On,' are material from the same autobiographical files, though of a less valedictory nature; the 'Journal of Curiosities' is a final clearance of these files; the 'Postscript' is a mere secretarial annotation to make my *Good-bye* if possible more conscientious yet. I have not (in the words of Harry Tate's war-time song) come back in half an hour to say good-bye again: it is still the same occasion. Nor, though I have said my good-bye to all that, do I wish to seem unaware that it still goes on, behind my back, so to speak, with every appearance of variety and experiment; and on and on.

R. G.

Majorca, 1930.

I MEAN to say precisely that we have stopped. We have stopped. And of course the crowd accumulates. . . . My dear crowd, be persuaded that whatever your services in the past nothing more is wanted of you now. Nothing serious, at any rate.

[From *Though Gently*, by LAURA RIDING.]

PART ONE

POSTSCRIPT TO 'GOOD-BYE TO ALL THAT'

When *Good-bye to All That* first appeared in England I wrote a number of letters to the Press in answer to my critics, not unaware of the helpful effect that letters of this sort have on sales. When one has written a book in the certainty of an assured circulation of twenty thousand copies[1]—an unusual and even monstrous event, but one that may happen to any writer if he needs a lump of money sincerely enough—it is no use being squeamish about using whatever convenient free advertisements offer to increase the sales by a few more thousands. First I was asked to make a 'general reply to my critics' in the *Daily Mail*, and did so as follows:

That *Good-bye to All That* is selling well does not surprise me, because I have been able to put into the book all the frank answers to all the inquisitive questions that people like to ask about other people's lives. And not only that, but I have more or less deliberately mixed in all the ingredients that I know are mixed into other popular books. For instance, while I was writing, I reminded myself that people like reading about food and drink, so I searched my memory for the meals that have had significance in my life and put them down. And they like reading about murders, so I was careful not to leave out any of the six or seven that I could tell about. Ghosts, of course. There must, in every book of this sort, be at least one ghost story with a possible explanation, and

[1] The present volume is not a case in point. My friends the booksellers will greet me reproachfully, when we next meet, with 'Tell us, Mr Graves; when are you going to give us another *real* book?'

one without any explanation, except that it was a ghost. I put in three or four ghosts that I remembered.

And kings. I introduced kings where I could. People also like reading about other people's mothers. I put in mine and teased her a little to make her read naturally; she did not mind at all, but wrote teasing me back, because she is a very good sort, or I should not have teased her. And they like hearing about T. E. Lawrence, because he is supposed to be a mystery man; so, although I had already written his biography, I found a few more things to say about him. And, of course, the Prince of Wales. And racing motorists and millionaires and pedlars and tramps and adopted children and Arctic explorers. I had met one or two of each of these and I put them in. No, when I come to think of it, I had to leave out the best of the Arctic explorers, because he did not fit too well in the chapter where he belonged.

But let me tell you about him now. He was Dr. Wilson, and I met him in 1909. He was a quiet Scot with blue eyes and a frost-bitten nose, and he was one of the three who, a year or so later, died with Captain Scott in that snow hut when Oates walked out in the blizzard to give the other fellows a chance of living. There was one great joke against Wilson which he could not live down. The expedition he had been with had once landed on an island inhabited entirely by penguins. They had never seen man before and were without fear. Wilson and a few others went into the middle of the colony to watch their habits. They noticed that there were considerably more males than females among the birds, and that there was no promiscuity in mating; the pairs kept together throughout the breeding season. The method

of courtship was curious. The male bird would take a stone in his beak and drop it at the feet of the female; and the female, if she approved of him as a mate, would pick it up and play about with it. Well, a male who had not yet succeeded in finding a female, saw Wilson, was astonished, paused irresolutely, and then came towards him and dropped at his feet the joke that he could never afterwards live down.

As I was saying, I put in all the usual people and things that people like reading about. People like reading about poets. I put in a lot of poets. I have met most of the best-known ones in England. Then, of course, Prime Ministers. I found three of these. A little foreign travel is usually needed; I hadn't done much of this, but I made the most of what I had. Sport is essential. Regrettably there was no polo, yachting, or flying material to offer; but boxing, precipice-climbing, and an occasional cricket and football match made up for that. People are always very curious to know how what are known as 'artists' manage to pick up a living when their work obviously does not sell. I told them. And they like to hear a little about commerce: so there was that village-shop experience to record. Other subjects of interest that could not be neglected were school episodes, love affairs (regular and irregular), wounds, weddings, religious doubts, methods of bringing up children, severe illnesses, suicides. But the best bet of all is battles, and I had been in two quite good ones — the first conveniently enough a failure, though set off by extreme heroism, the second a success, though a little clouded by irresolution.

So it was easy to write a book that would interest everybody. Because there was the material and it was all true

and needed no elaboration. (Given material of equal interest, biography will now always outsell the novel.) And it was already roughly organised in my mind in the form of a number of short stories, which is the way that people find it easiest to be interested by the things that interest them. They like what they call 'situations': I had plenty to give them. And, of course, plenty of letters, because they make the story read true. When I say 'people' I mean English and Americans. Germans and Scandinavians are, I believe, much the same in their daily likes. But, for them, I had been warned that no English biography would be considered complete without a mention of Shaw and Galsworthy. So in they went, with Bertrand Russell, Lytton Strachey, Wells and Bennett, and George Moore for good measure. I did not need to consider the French. The French read only one-tenth as many books per head as the Germans, and for popular reading prefer their own sort, which are mostly about jealousy or complaisance in cases of bourgeois adultery; I did not know about that.

Of course, the most sensational part is the war part. But I was surprised at being acclaimed in headlines of daily papers as the author of a violent treatise against war. For I had tried not to show any bias for or against war as a human institution, but merely to describe what happened to me during a particular and not at all typical one in which I took part. Much of this experience was painful, even shameful, but by no means all. I did record that half-way through the war I began to have doubts as to whether its continuance was justified or not. But that was only after two years of attrition, so this might easily have been construed as a plea for short modern wars

fought in a somewhat more gentlemanly way. As it happens, it wasn't; but I left the matter open.

Then they said that I had spoken bitterly against my regiment, the Royal Welch Fusiliers. I was surprised at this, too, because I had taken every opportunity of showing that it had all the soldierly virtues in unequalled measure. I had spoken of my loyalty to the regiment, never disappointed, and even gone so far as to recall my appreciation of arms-drill as a disciplinary institution. Critics wrote that I had libelled the dead by saying that company officers were often helplessly intoxicated in trenches. And all that I had really recorded was that after a long spell their nerves had often got so bad that they had to treat themselves with whisky to stave off a breakdown. It was the only available medicine.

I only once saw officers riotously drunk in trenches, and never any dead drunk. One of the riotously drunk I remember well: it was during a battle. He was a ranker-lieutenant, and he did a very heroic deed which only a drunken man or a fanatic would have attempted. And a bullet went neatly through both nostrils, and he came back sobered and cursing and bleeding like a pig, and everyone laughed, though it was not a laughing day. And later again he was, they say, equally riotous, because it was another battle, in a wood; and a tree fell on him and broke his arm, and everyone laughed again. He was an old soldier and a brave man, and fought better when very drunk, or, in his own words, 'blue with juice.' He had the China medal, and died early this year. No, there was a lot of steady soaking at the rate of half a bottle a day, gradually increased to two, which did not mean intoxication in the criminal sense of 'drunk on duty,' but only a

pleasant, though dangerous, blurry-mindedness. I wrote about this and said that it became impossible for the addict to take clear decisions in important crises. No blame here. Unless on the system that did not allow 'professional survivors' to have occasional long leave.

I am accused of speaking ill of Charterhouse, where I was at school, and of attacking the Public School system. I did not speak any more ill of Charterhouse than of myself as a Carthusian. And what would be the use of attacking the Public School system? There it is, still going stolidly on, showing no signs of self-doubt. But I am glad that, so far, I have not had any factual inaccuracies pointed out in any of the reviews; I expected many, both from public school boys and soldiers.[1]

A few corrections have come privately in letters. Dr. Dunn, the regimental surgeon of the 2nd Royal Welch Fusiliers, has written to tell me that though he finds that my account of events at which we were both present tallies with the notes which he took of them at the time himself, I have once or twice reported from hearsay events at which I was not present, and so gone wrong. For instance, I mention an account of the High Wood engagement given me in hospital by a wounded staff-officer a day or two later. He said that the survivors of the two Scottish battalions, the 1st Cameronians and the 5th Scottish Rifles, had retreated at dusk and left the Royal Welch alone. This was untrue, Dr. Dunn writes. The Scots stuck it creditably; the only battalion that disappeared was the Public Schools Battalion of the Royal

[1] I have since been delighted to hear, in a roundabout way, that my scrupulous parents found it necessary to write to the Head Master of Charterhouse apologising on my behalf for the disservice that I had done the school.

Fusiliers attached to our brigade. Still, that was what I was told; there was a prejudice somehow against the Scots among the English troops in the 33rd Division (and others) as I mentioned elsewhere. Probably because in newspaper accounts of fighting the Scots were always given much more than their fair share of the credit. In attack they were spectacular, in defence inclined to be uncertain. The journalists naturally concentrated on attack. English troops were on the whole less dashing. As I recorded, our adjutant once voiced the general prejudiced opinion of non-Scots that 'the Jocks run like hell both ways.'

Anyhow, on this occasion, the Jocks only dashed in the right direction, and I apologise for reporting a libel. And there were occasional English battalions that almost consistently ran in the wrong direction. I give them that. I am not biased. By blood I am more Scottish than English. And there was a Highland Territorial Division that deserved at least a modest part of the extravagant glory that journalists gave it, and that it gave itself. It ran (almost) consistently in the right direction.

One blunder I made was to say that of five brothers of military age only I saw active service. That was misleading and inaccurate. It seemed that I was accusing them of dodging the draft. The youngest was waiting to go out to France when the Armistice came. The eldest did dangerous and ingenious work in the Intelligence section of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, for which he was appropriately decorated. Another enlisted in Canada and was invalided out of the Army, and re-enlisted twice more and was finally discharged and told not to try again. The fourth was not allowed to resign

his semi-military appointment in the Sudan, though he, too, tried to join the Army. All I intended to say was that the cruder boast of wounds and battle experiences happened to fall to me and invested me in the eyes of the rest of my family with an undesired glory.

One of the best letters I have had comes from Mr. Frank Richards, of Blaina, Monmouthshire, whom I remember as a good man in a trench. It runs:

Dear Mr. Graves,

I have been reading some extracts from your book in the Welsh papers. I was a reservist when the war broke out and went out to France with the Second R.W.F., the battalion I had served with abroad. I was with it from start to finish, taking part in all the shows they were in, the first twelve months as a rifle and bayonet man, the remainder as a company signaller. With reference to Captain Samson's death, that was true what you wrote of his biting his hand nearly through to prevent himself crying out in pain. There was a platoon officer who was as drunk as a lord that morning; just before they went over Captain Samson sees him and tells him to remember he was an officer and try to behave like a gentleman. That platoon officer got shot through the leg.

The Field Punishment No. 1 and Prussianism that they say you wrote about—the two were mild when you was with the battalion compared to the first six months. One company commander that we had used to pull out his revolver about fifty times a day, threatening us one and all. A junior officer followed his example: we nicknamed them Buffalo Bill and Deadwood Dick. You might have known that company commander. He left us

to go to the First Battalion early in 1915. His name was Captain ——. (*Do* I remember him? And his loud roaring threats? Indeed, Frank Richards, I do. I will write to you privately about him and the First Battalion.) I see it mentioned that you were a friend of Lieutenant Sassoon who was not very long with the Second, but long enough to win the respect of every man of us. He got wounded in the Hindenburg Tunnel. (He had a tall young officer friend that was killed at Black Watch Corner.) I remember a message coming through some months after to Major Kearsley. It ran something like this, 'Am ordered to Egypt; can you do something to get me back to France?' From Sassoon.

Polygon Wood in 1917. That was a stunt on a par with High Wood. Doctor Dunn unofficially took command of the battalion on the first day, I was his orderly then. I always considered the doctor to be the bravest and coolest man who ever stepped foot in France. The second day I was orderly to Major Kearsley when he was shot through the ankle. He was a brave man, too. Hoping that this letter will not bore you.

Yours sincerely,

FRANK RICHARDS.

Of course, ingredients are not everything in a story; for a book to be popular it has, I believe, to be written in a state of suppressed excitement, and preferably against time and with a shortage of money. And the sentences have to be short and the words simple. And the most painful chapters have to be the jokiest. And nothing must be held back that can possibly be given.

. . . My father, Alfred Perceval Graves, who, at the

age of eighty-three is writing his autobiography, heard last July that I was writing mine, and wrote begging me not to do so. At least, if I must do so, he added, he wanted to see the passages referring to himself. I told him that I would not ask to see what he said about me in his autobiography if he would not ask to see what I said about him in mine. As I published first, he now has the advantage of me. However, I notice that he has made a public statement about my book which is not unappreciative so it is likely that his retrospections where they overlap with mine will not differ materially from them.[1]

[1] [Note, July 24th, 1930.] His book has now appeared with the reminiscential title *To Return To All That*. I find that he has printed some early poems of mine without my permission, and, also without permission, a group of letters that I wrote home from France in 1915. I do not complain of this infringement of copyright, having played the pirate myself before now, but deprecate the supererogatory use of material to which I had access while writing my book, but which I rejected. I read also that he has discovered 'bitter and hostile criticism' in my book 'against those who only wished me well.' And that he is apparently grieved that I am not a good Graves—in spite of characteristic talents obviously, to him, inherited from the male line. He cannot, of course, offer excuses on my behalf on the score of my being a genius, because genius does not occur in the best families, only inherited characteristic talents—genius is a fluke, and flukes are not gentlemanly. So he has been forced to excuse my behaviour by blaming it on injuries that I incurred while gallantly serving family, God and King in the trenches—and on subsequent enrichments, outside the radius of the decently happy family circle, at which he darkly hints. My father believes in the slow passage of time as a powerful force for moulding gifted rebels into respected servants of the State; and since we come of a line of centenarians—there was a John who reached 103 and a Richard who reached 111—he is confident that I may finally be restored to the company of the *Suaves dum Graves* and that he may even live to see it. Other members of my family, to whom I have frequently had to explain that the consanguineous tie is a hindrance rather than a help to mutual understanding, are not so optimistic.

One thing at least is certain; my father has lived his eighty-four years without, so far as I can learn, having ever made a single enemy; and whatever ingratitude he may mentally charge me with, as he finds renewed proof of my unwillingness to enter the family inheritance as a loyal cadet, he will always continue to remain, in all sincerity, ever my affectionate father Alfred Percival Graves. It would spoil this note to write a single word more.

A correspondent, signing himself 'Black Watch,' wrote to the *Daily Mail* later, and drew this answer from me:

To the Editor of *The Daily Mail.*

Sir, — In the course of misrepresenting what I wrote recently to *The Daily Mail* about two Scottish battalions at High Wood (and not about Scottish troops in general) a reader who signs himself 'Black Watch' refers, irrelevantly, to an order-of-merit list of British divisions published by the German authorities some time during the war.

In this list, it is alleged, the Scottish divisions came out on top, with only the Guards and Naval Divisions (both containing a large proportion of Scottish troops) in the running at all. Where is this list? Who has seen it? Has 'Black Watch' seen it? By what authority was it published? Was it first recorded (as was the case with many of these 'authentic' war-documents) in a British Divisional 'Comic Cuts'? If so, was it that of the 51st Division? Has it any more historical value than the Corpse Factory, the Angels of Mons, the Russians on the Western Front in August 1914, the Crucified Canadian, District Paternity Officials in Germany, and all the rest of those old friends?

And if it exists in any credible form at all, and favours Scottish troops even to half the extent claimed, how can non-Jocks believe that its compilers did not draw on the contemporary British Press for their order of merit rather than on first-hand information from German infantry officers and N.C.O.'s in France? For the Jocks have always got far more than their fair share of war-glory; chiefly because of the romance of the kilt and the bagpipes

and the predominance of Scots as journalists. And whatever may be the truth of the first and last clauses of the Welsh officer's prejudiced accusation that I quoted in my book without comment: 'The Jocks are dirty in trenches and run like hell both ways,' the middle clause 'they skite (i.e. brag) too much,' is one with which I hereby have much pleasure in identifying myself. I regret that my absence from England has prevented me from answering 'Black Watch' sooner.

There were no answers to this enquiry. Meanwhile, I had written to *The Daily Herald* about incidents in my book that had aroused a storm of anger in the Scottish Press:

I am interested to see that certain senior officers of the Highland Light Infantry (who were not present, however, at the time) propose to take official action against me for printing an account of the Loos fighting of September 25th and 26th, 1915. I said, they complain, that the survivors of the 10th H.L.I. were in a demoralised condition after a courageous but unsuccessful attack on the Hohenzollern redoubt, in which the greater part of the battalion was lost.

I recorded in my book a visit that I made on September 26th to the H.L.I. trench: my company of the 2nd Royal Welch Fusiliers was on the extreme right of the 2nd Division, and the 10th H.L.I. on the extreme left of the Scottish New Army Division whose exploits Major Ian Hay Beith wrote up shortly afterwards in his propaganda novel, *The First Hundred Thousand*.

Ian Hay blamed 'the flatcaps on the left'—that is, the Royal Welch Fusiliers and Middlesex—for 'letting

down' the Scots. This was prejudiced and inaccurate, and caused much resentment at the time. I did not, therefore, trouble in my book to conceal what I saw of these Scots after their attack. I have noted elsewhere a contemporary non-Scottish opinion of the Scottish troops that they 'run like hell both ways.' This was overstating the case. The fact is, there was a particular prejudice in the Royal Welch against two Scottish battalions in their own brigade owing to an incident in the first month of the war—and against the Scots in general because of a question of sportsmanship in an Army football final some years before.[1]

The Scots, of course, boasted themselves the only fighters in the Army. Anyhow, what I recorded was that I went down the H.L.I. trench some time in the morning of the 26th. I walked nearly a quarter of a mile before seeing either a sentry or an officer. There were dead men, sleeping men, wounded men, gassed men, all lying anyhow. The trench had been used as a latrine. Finally, I met a Royal Engineer officer. He said to me: 'If the Bosche knew what an easy job it was, he'd just walk over and take this trench.' So we fortified our flank, cutting fire positions in the communication trench which separated us from them. The 5th Scottish Rifles were in support to us and the 1st Middlesex, and one of them has written to say that he also visited the H.L.I. and found conditions just as I described. He adds that no attempt was made to clear the trench of gas fumes, and confirms my account of the 5th Scottish Rifle sergeant who stopped the panic of the H.L.I. when they heard

[1] Simla, 1912. The Highland Light Infantry persistently kicked into touch in order to keep their lead. Hence the cry, 'H.L.I., H.L.I.'

'Cease fire!' as 'Retire,' and came rushing back. He recalls the sergeant's name as M'Donald: as M'Donald was decorated for stopping the panic I don't see that any number of senior officers of the H.L.I. can do much about it. It is clear that in this case at least the Jocks did run like hell both ways. At another time it might have been English or Welsh.

This witness adds that not more than a hundred men were involved, which is the number claimed for the survivors of the battalion. If only that amount survived I must have overshot the 10th H.L.I. frontage considerably and walked into other Highland units (which makes the case worse), for I certainly passed at least four or five hundred of these demoralised men in that walk. The witness says that the panic-rush was led by men of the gas-company, and that one or two Welshmen were also involved. I can believe this. I came up a minute or two later, and naturally was not told about the behaviour of these one or two Welshmen.

I take the opportunity of explaining here that in the matter of the High Wood engagement, where I was wounded before the Royal Welch reached their objective, I reported, rather as having a certain effect on me than as being true, the confused accounts given me in hospital of the progress of the attack. I never heard the authentic account. My chief informant, a staff-officer, told me that he had watched our attack and that he had heard that at nightfall the survivors of the two Scottish battalions and an English battalion also engaged, had legged it, but had been brought back by a Catholic priest, Father McCabe (it should have been McShane). This was false. The Scottish battalions stood fast. It was only the English

battalion that McShane brought back when they broke. I am inserting a footnote to this effect in the next edition of my book, as an apology to the Scots if they want one.

But the confusion of that fight was so great that one of the Scots who was wounded in the wood writes under the impression that the Welsh let the rest of the brigade down. In my book I was anxious to record the atmosphere of competitive boasting, jealousy, suspicion and lies that regimental or divisional loyalty produced in inter-battalion and inter-divisional relations. Once in the latter part of the war I happened to find myself in a gathering of Scottish officers, mostly full of whisky, and one of them, forgetting his manners, wanted to make me personally responsible for the loss of Scottish lives in a battle on the Nieueport front, when Sergeant Philips of our 10th battalion was said to have deserted on the night before and given away the plan of attack!

This was an aspect of war that needed to be given. I think I kept the balance pretty even. I recorded 'shameful' behaviour on the part of certain Welsh troops and 'gallant' behaviour of Scots. I recorded anti-Jock prejudice of the English and anti-English prejudice of the Jocks. I recorded that I was partly of Scottish blood and had no Welsh or English in me. My presence in the Royal Welch was accidental. Of course, in published accounts of wars it is always someone else, unspecified, who runs, never one's own comrades—that keeps up the prestige of regiments.

Siegfried Sassoon is the only Englishman who has properly described this part of the war. I quote one of his poems from memory:

You can't believe that British troops 'retire,'
When Hell's last horror breaks them and they run
Trampling the terrible corpses—blind with sweat.

The 10th H.L.I. were like that. A survivor writes: 'We had a dreadful time even before the attack began. A heavy barrage was kept on us, and men dropped right and left. The shelling tore up the gas cylinders which had been buried for the attack, and as they burst, the gas all came back on us and knocked out a large part of the battalion. Officers and N.C.O.'s were wiped out before we even left the trench, but in spite of that those of us who could stand went over the top in our right place in the first wave. But what we had come through was nothing to what was to follow. The artillery had missed the wire. It was intact. We pulled at it with our bare hands and hacked at it with bayonets and wire-cutters, and all the time the enemy kept at us with his artillery and machine-guns. In no time there was only about a hundred left, but we fought on, till one of the few surviving officers ordered us back to the line.'

The last horror came with a supposed counter-attack.

I should add that I have had a private letter from the official War Office historian of the Loos fighting complimenting me on my account, which apparently gives certain details that had not come to light, while agreeing with what was already known.

Then I had to write to the *Morning Post*, which had, by the way, been unable to review the book, no doubt for fear of offending its readers:

SIR,—I was surprised at the headlines of a Scottish paper sent to me here in Spain: 'Poet's Serious Allegations Against The Cheshire Regiment,' for I had none on my conscience. Reading underneath I found that Lieutenant-General Sir Hastings Anderson, the Colonel of the regiment, had been writing to your journal, strongly denying a gross mis-statement made in my autobiography, *Good-bye to All That*. So I was still further surprised. I will not accuse so distinguished a soldier as Sir Hastings of having no sense of humour. I will instead pleasantly apologise for having drawn my irony a little too fine for the casual War Office reader. The paragraph which he quotes is one in which I have jokingly tried to recapture that boastful spirit of regimental loyalty in which young subalterns, who have yet to see fighting themselves, are inclined to belittle the glorious battle-traditions of rival corps.

Sir Hastings is aware that the Cheshires and Royal Welch Fusiliers have regimental depots only a few miles from each other; and that the friendly rivalry between the regiments is intensified by the Cheshires being the 22nd Foot and therefore provokingly senior in the Line to the Royal Welch, the 23rd, and by the Royal Welch having had the luck to have fought more battles than the Cheshires.

I do not know what particular anniversary the Cheshires keep sacred, whether it is Oak Apple Day or the day of their famous victory at Meanee; but Sir Hastings, if he looks back over the years, will probably recollect that on the anniversary celebrations, after the port had gone round several times, he and his brother-subalterns used to celebrate the unique glories of the Cheshire regiment

in exactly the same way as I and my brother-subalterns, in August 1914, celebrated those of the Royal Welch. The absurd legend of the Cheshires having lost their 'Royal' (is there any instance in Army history of a similar fatality? It would be simpler, surely, to disband a regiment than to discourage it so) was no doubt matched in his day, as in mine, by the equally apocryphal and equally attractive legend that the Royal Welch flash was a black badge of dishonour earned for looting the town of St. Pierre after the capture of Martinique in 1809.

I have never inquired closely into the Cheshire legend if only because it is sufficiently unbelievable not to call for any active effort at disproof; but Sir Hastings has made its origin clear enough — the anomaly of the Third Battalion (militia) bearing the title of Royal while the First and Second Battalions are without it. If my omission to put an asterisk and footnote: *Please laugh: this is a joke*, has interfered with recruiting on the Cheshire side of the Welsh border, I can only regard this sequel as comic. The Cheshires as I knew them in France later were as good a regiment as any and needed no 'Royal' or 'Loyal' to prove their devotion to the Crown: I recorded elsewhere that by general consent the British county regiments were held during the war to be among the most dependable troops in the Expeditionary Force.

I selected the legend of the 'Royal' Cheshires as a better one to joke about than most and I am glad to say that the Welsh press — the Welsh have a very quick sense of humour — has caught at the joke and quoted it gladly. But perhaps any other legend would have done as well. I really believe that had I revived the fine old cry, 'Who sold their Bibles to buy beer?' the Colonel of the Holy

Boys would have felt it necessary to protest in your columns that there was not the faintest historical basis for this very damaging legend; and the East Anglian press, taking the cue, would have howled for my blood.

My indebtedness to the press-cutting system. Press-cuttings collected from papers published all over the English-speaking world give an author a range of critical opinion on his book that he could not possibly get by any other means. But for my subscription to a press-cutting agency I would not have been able to see the critical cancelling out as complete; and until that happens with a book of mine I am not satisfied, I suspect that there is something wrong with it. I would probably have missed either one or the other of many contradictory pairs of verdicts; for instance, either that of the critic who wrote for the leading Bristol daily or that of the critic who wrote for the leading Glasgow daily. (The Bristol man held that a hundred years hence my book would be the single admired survivor of the present multitudes of war-books; the Glasgow man, also writing about the war-chapters, called for a summary suppression of the book 'lest a hundred years hence readers may be misled into believing that there is as much as a grain of truth in this whole collection of unmitigated tripe.') Or I might have missed either Arnold Bennett's praise of my fine straightforward prose style in the *Evening Standard*, or Edmund Blunden's condemnation of it in *Time and Tide* as slip-shod and incoherent. Or I might have missed Sir Ian Hamilton's contrast between Erich Remarque and myself, in which Remarque was praised for reporting accurate facts and myself censured for

dealing only in emotions, and have only read the exactly contrary opinions of two or three critics of less illustrious name. Without the aid of the press-cutting system (though I could scarcely have missed the front-page sensation: 'STARTLING NEW WAR BOOK: AMAZING REVELATIONS,' that the *Daily Herald* and *Star* awarded the book on the day of publication — to my surprise, for I had not thought of it particularly as a war-book) I should almost certainly have missed the West African weekly which complained that the war-chapters were 'lacking in that excitement of incident in which books of this character are usually so rich.'

From my press-cuttings, again, I learned that an ex-major of the Gordon Highlanders, at a public indignation meeting at Edinburgh, had characterised my book as the most disgusting of all the many disgusting books which pour in a filthy stream from the press to-day; but that the *Christian World* had given its blessing without reserve and that a unitarian minister in the North of London had been so struck by the clean air of healthy morality that blew through it that he had made it the text of a sermon, later published as a popular pamphlet. I am glad too that I did not miss the twin cuttings, from the Protestant journal which accused me of a bias towards Catholicism and from the Catholic journal which accused me of nourishing a virulent animosity against Catholicism. On particular points of fact there was the same exact cancelling-out of opinion even where nearly everyone happened to be offended by what I had written. For instance, that business about the H.L.I. at Loos. My account was read, in Scotland, in conjunction with that opinion of the Royal Welch officer, recorded, let

me repeat, without prejudice, 'The Jocks are dirty in trenches, skite too much, and run like hell both ways,' and the recorded opinion of someone else at a Training Camp early in 1916, that Highlanders were no use when they had lost their officers.

In the Scottish press the following critical comments were therefore made by various writers:

That it was a foul lie for me to say that Jocks run like hell both ways, or that they are no good without officers.

That the survivors of this particular battalion never ran; all that happened was that a small squad of men doubled back in a hurry to get up the tea-dixies.

That these survivors only numbered a hundred after their heavy losses of the previous day, and being without officers were naturally susceptible to the cry 'retire,' which came originally from the English troops.

That they did run, but so did other non-Scottish troops. That the Royal Engineers headed the rush.

That they neither ran nor showed any signs of confusion and that a committee of senior officers of the Regiment would take official action to nail the lie.

That the sergeant who stopped the rush of the English troops and gently led back the Scots who uncertainly followed them was typical of all that is best in the Scottish soldier.

That it is dastardly to record that Scottish troops ever ran away, because of the pain that the mothers and widows of the fallen must feel on reading about it. And anyhow no Scottish troops have ever run in this or any previous war.

That it was always the English in the war who ran away and let down the Scots; at many stages of the conflict it was only little Scotland of all the allies that

kept the offensive against the Germans. That, however the English might calumniate Scotland, the Germans always professed the greatest admiration for the Scots as fighters; and they were in a position to judge fairly.

That the Scots were the most modest of men and never boasted; only the English did that.

That the Scots had, off their own bat, won the battles of Blenheim, Minden, Plassey, Quebec, Albuhera, Waterloo, Alma, Inkerman, Omdurman and many more.

That Robert Graves was of German blood and that this accounted completely for his calumnies.

That Robert Graves had a Scottish grandmother and that this accounted for his vivid and forceful book.

That Highland regiments were largely recruited in England.

My post-bag was equally varied—angry challenges to debates, charming invitations by people I had never met to meals at towns I have no intention of visiting, solicitors' letters, demanding the eradication of certain offensive passages, courteous requests that I should honorarily vice-preside over some literary society of which I had never previously heard, attempts to convert me to various forms of religion (mostly evangelical), charity appeals, letters pointing out existent and non-existent errors and misprints—every imaginable variety of letter from a tribute to the efficacy of my book in curing a reader's asthma to the following anonymous but none the less valuable note of abuse:

MR. GRAVES,

Whoever you may be you certainly lack all the instincts of a gentleman. In consequence of several Press notices

I obtained your book from a Library, but before getting through half way I returned it in disgust and amazement that the honour of a commission should have been conferred on you. You are a discredit to the Service, disloyal to your comrades and typical of that miserable breed which tries to gain notoriety by belittling others. Your language is just 'water-closet,' and evidently your regiment resented such an undesirable member. The only good page is that quoting the beautiful letter of The Little Mother, but even there you betray the degenerate mind by interleaving it between obscenities.

You may make money out of the book, as it will perhaps appeal to similar vulgar minds, but its general tenor is being strongly condemned, and I have stopped several people from getting it already.

I only hope that some day one of those, whom with self-satisfaction you have attempted to decry, will meet you and administer the chastisement you richly deserve.

Signed: A SOLDIER WHO HAS SERVED ALL OVER THE WORLD.

PS.—I purposely avoid giving my name because you would only send a reply in unclean language.

And when this was all over I had a letter forwarded to me by the *Daily Mail* from Captain I——, formerly of the Suffolk Regiment, and present at the High Wood-Delville Wood operation of July 1916. From this letter it seems likely that the Brigade-Major who misled me had heard an account of a Scottish Rifle melt-away on July 18th, and post-dated it by two days.

To The Editor of the *Daily Mail*.

Dear Sir,

'Troops Who Stuck it Out.'

If Mr. Robert Graves, in his contribution to to-day's *Daily Mail*, refers to a battalion of Scottish Rifles who were near High Wood on or about the 18*th July*, 1916, his original imputation was at least in some measure correct. I hope and expect that there was a certain number of S.R. in the front who 'stuck it out,' but as I was in support behind them I was only able to see the stream of men which came filtering back. I therefore went forward and reported this fact to such of their officers as I could find—only two and both useless. They were cowering and sweating in *privates' tunics* in the first dug-out I came to, and they neither attempted nor desired to restrain their fast-disappearing force. I ascertained that the men had ammunition and rations and then had to cut back to Caterpillar Valley. I much grudged the time spent.

However, no one knew very clearly what was going on, and on the night of 19th-20th July, we attacked Delville Wood—quite near them—and then learnt of the gallant behaviour of those almost deserted South Africans near Longueval, all within a bowshot, a much happier picture to contemplate from an ethical standpoint.

Please don't drop this in the w.p.b. If *you* don't want to know or print anything I have written, please send it on to Mr. Graves, who seems to be seeking facts.

I enclose my card.

Yours faithfully,

C. I—— (late Captain)

3rd, attached 2nd, Suffolk Regiment, 3rd Division.

Two other letters of interest had already arrived.

Lydstep, Lawter Road,
Wilton Park, Blackburn.
17th Dec., 1929.

Captain Robert Graves.

Dear Sir,

I wish to correct the statement you make in to-day's issue of the *Daily Mail*, when you state that Dr. Dunn said the Public Schools Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers disappeared.

In the first place we were decimated and without officers or non-coms., and we carried on in isolated groups. I was one of a party of six men who had dug in across the left centre of the wood (High Wood) and adjoined a machine-gun emplacement which was manned by the M.G.C. with a 'Vickers' gun. About 3 a.m. on the 21st, i.e. twenty-two hours after the attack, we were relieved by the 1st Queen's Royal West Surrey Regt., who came into our trench and took over, having come from the rear of the wood. I was in the wood when a party of 2nd R.W.F. fired on a group of Germans who came to give themselves up and then started to sling stick bombs when within range. I am sorry Dr. Dunn has got the impression that we 'cut off,' for such was not the case. Personally, I have a great admiration for Dr. Dunn, who was one of the best 'M.O.'s' who ever went to France, and who did great work at High Wood and I am pleased to know that he is still alive.

If you possibly can clear up this inaccuracy I shall be very greatly indebted to you and if you write to Dr. Dunn

you might explain the reason for our so-called disappearance.

Wishing you everything of the best this Xmas to you and yours,

I remain,
Yours faithfully,
HAROLD H. FYSON.
Late 20th Royal Fusiliers, 33rd Division.

[I believe Mr. Fyson; though the melting away of numbers of the battalion is beyond dispute. Monsignor McShane has recently written to the Scottish Press confirming this part of the story.]

The Orchard, Plumstead,
Aldborough, Norwich.
15th December, 1929.

DEAR GRAVES,

In *Good-bye to All That*, p. 276, 'a brigade-major, wounded in the leg,' is not entirely accurate. In those days I was the 'professional survivor' of the 5th Scottish Rifles—which may not recommend me to you. I was adjutant after the High Wood display, and was taking over from Mann—or handing over to him, I forget which—at Bouchavesnes when you came back to the 2nd Royal Welch. I remember you pointed out that you hadn't realised how highly you had been thought of till your people received your obituary notices. Anyway, being the professional survivor of 20 July, 1916, I can contradict the 'Brigade Major.'

The 98th Brigade came up and relieved the troops of the 19th Brigade in High Wood during the night. The

'Scotsmen' did not come away leaving 'your chaps all alone.' After about midday I was the only officer left in my battalion. I commanded the company on the right. We attacked on the right, the Cameronians on the left — we were not in support to them as stated on p. 270. We took our objectives and sundry Germans. About 9 a.m. the troops on the left fell back before a counter-attack — they didn't try to fight, as far as I saw. They were all mixed up — Cameronians, our people, Royal Fusiliers. The debacle was stopped in mid-wood, and we (I can only speak for my company on the right) re-took the objective. I was in a strong point at the east corner of the wood, which we had built according to orders, when the Welch Fusiliers came up. Moodie and his company came up behind me. They attacked North-West while we had attacked North-East. They took the whole wood. I know, because I had been summoned by Colonel Crawshay to his Headquarters at the south corner of the wood to report on the position. (By his orders I stayed with him till about 5 p.m. when the Germans attacked under heavy shell fire.) Pressey — commanding the 20th Field Company R.E. was there (why, I don't know) and went round the whole wood, and reported to Crawshay, while I was there, that it was entirely in our hands.

Crawshay then reported to the Brigade that he had taken the entire wood but would not be responsible for holding it unless reinforcements came up at once.

At the bombardment I went back to where my troops were, and stayed there till relieved. By then the Germans had got a footing in the North-West corner. After the arrival of the 98th Brigade I collected all of our men I could find, and reported to the R.W.F. headquarters.

'Mouldy' Williams was there and he came back with me by Bazentin-le-Grand to Mametz Wood.

I can endorse everything you say, or quote, of the gallantry of the 2nd Royal Welch Fusiliers; your other remarks about other battalions I may or may not agree with. I may be mistaken, but I gathered both then and from your book, that your regiment objected to the Cameronians more than to the 5th Scottish Rifles.

Yours sincerely,

J. S. COLBART.

[Yes, the 5th S.R., territorials, were dependable; as the 1st S.R. (Cameronians), who were regulars, were not. See Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, in the Hindenburg Trench episode of 1917.]

Then a letter which I wrote to the Editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*.

SIR, — The author of your leader of June 12, in pointing out that the Great War differed only in scale from previous wars, that in fact 'all serious wars have been dirty and horrible,' obscures the fact that except for certain wars of religion there have been few 'serious' wars in the world's history, and that, in general, the more 'savage' the community the less serious the war. Savage warfare is generally playful, punctilious and desultory, involving few casualties and little damage to property; civilised warfare becomes more and more organised towards an all-out seriousness to which every member of the nations engaged (not merely the fighting caste) is committed. He also obscures the fact that the average British soldier

of 1914-18, unlike his predecessors, the scum of the gaols who sacked Badajoz, had to be duped into the toughness and immorality that make a successful civilised fighter, by lying propaganda and a campaign of organised blood lust. This was the peculiar dirtiness of the Great War.

I was sorry to see so cursory a notice given in one of your recent issues to Brigadier-General F. P. Crozier's book, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, where this last important point was clearly brought out. After all, General Crozier cannot, like most writers of war-books, be accused of lacking either a pre-War background of values, knowledge of military history, previous campaigning experience, patriotism, or war-time efficiency; or still less of being a sensationalist 'picking up the substantial crumbs that fall from Remarque's table.' That a senior officer of his distinction had turned king's evidence against modern war was an event that should surely have been more attentively greeted; and his courage in admitting that he owed his war-time successes as a brigade commander to preaching and practising the all-out theory of fighting should surely have earned some warmer acknowledgment than 'one cannot say truly that he reveals himself as an engaging personality.'

But what is meant by the *truthfulness* of war-books? It seems that there are at least four war-book classifications to each of which a different test of truthfulness should be applied:—the history of a unit or of a campaign: the personal memoirs of a combatant: the propaganda novel: the *genre* novel. The test of historical accuracy which M. Cru has used in his *Témoins* can be strictly applied only to the first of these. To the second it cannot be applied so strictly. It was practically impossible (as well as for-

bidden) to keep a diary in any active trench-sector, or to send letters home which would be of any great post-War documentary value; and the more efficient the soldier the less time, of course, he took from his job to write about it. Great latitude should therefore be allowed to a soldier who has since got his facts or dates mixed. I would even paradoxically say that the memoirs of a man who went through some of the worst experiences of trench warfare are not truthful if they do not contain a high proportion of falsities. High-explosive barrages will make a temporary liar or visionary of anyone; the old trench-mind is at work in all over-estimation of casualties, 'unnecessary' dwelling on horrors, mixing of dates and confusion between trench rumours and scenes actually witnessed. General Crozier, by the way, honestly admits that his memory was in the later stages of his long service badly affected by the strain; but, as writers of books of this sort should, gives units, dates, places, wherever possible as a pledge of intended truthfulness.

As for the propaganda novels, they are only to be judged, if at all, by their effectiveness as propaganda. As *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, their forerunner, was written somewhat untruthfully in order to make people recognise the truth that the institution of slavery was not in keeping with humanitarianism, so the somewhat untruthful *Le Feu* and *Im Westen nichts Neues* make the same statement with regard to modern war. As propaganda they are the more effective in that they are not dated records, but dramatic generalisations, and so not critically vulnerable.

Finally, there is the fourth type, the *genre* war novels, at which your leader-writer seems to be chiefly sniping, which, however, are to be read no more and no less seri-

ously than the detective novels listed in your 'Fiction Briefs.' These treat the already classical themes of fire-eating officer and sullen men, drunken officer and gallant men, fraternisation of mortally wounded soldiers in no-man's-land, or unjust Court-martial on the supposed coward, in the same free way as the murdered-financier, stupid-village-constable, cigarette-stub-in-the-garden, suspected-hero themes are treated by the detective writers. It would be absurd to apply to them Mr. Douglas Jerrold's[1] statistical test of frequency in actual experience. Their excuse is not history, or personality, or propaganda, but, I suppose, what is called 'art'; and so long as they obey what your admirable Fiction Briefs reviewer calls 'the rules of the game,' they can pass—the chief rule being that all the high-lights of war must be put in, from the debauched Waac to the crucified Canadian, and that the hero shall *not* in the end be awarded the Victoria Cross.

Yours,

Majorca. ROBERT GRAVES.

Of course, I am not really interested in war-criticism, but I wish to make it quite plain that I cannot be suitably classified with pacifists and internationalists. My attitude is that war is one of the characteristic pursuits of the crowd, with which I would not attempt to interfere, only deprecating it in so far as it interfered with me and failed to make the pleasurable most of itself. In this spirit I have composed the following, and trust that it will dissipate any doubt as to my understanding of the world as it still goes on:

[1] *The Lie About the War*, by Douglas Jerrold.

It is an unlikely situation; some important element that would make sense of it seems to have been overlooked. Among the so-and-so million responsible citizens of all the enlightened nations of the world there could not be found as many thousands to declare in favour of modern war as a reasonable means of settling disputes between nations. Yet these same responsible millions, ever since the disaster which converted them to their view, have been conscientiously over-taxing themselves in competitive preparations for a more outrageously modern war still.

The usual explanation given is quite inadequate. They speak of a world-wide misunderstanding continuously aggravating itself—a suspicion on the part of each nation that it will be treacherously attacked by its neighbours if it does not improve its defences in proportion to their powers of assault. Inadequate, too, is the further explanation tagged on to this—that the suspicion is fomented by generals, admirals and other professionals for whom reduction of armaments would mean a lessening of dignity, if not actual unemployment, and by the managers of armament trusts who owe a duty to their shareholders.

If suspicions were as strong as they are pretended to be it would have been impossible for such a small nation as Denmark, with a lootable capital, a prosperous peasantry and even one or two foreign colonies, to disarm as drastically as it has recently done, so that what army remains is no more than a modest police force—for the smaller the nation the less ready would it be to risk disarmament. On the contrary, the more powerful the nation the more ambitiously it still adds to its naval and military programmes.

If it were honestly thought that there were the least danger of a commercial war between any two Powers or groups of Powers—and modern war is supposedly always due to commercial rivalry—foreign travel in those countries would cease, trade would be restricted by a short-term credit system, armies, navies, air-forces and intelligence services would be permanently mobilised for action, there would be State-control of all food-stocks and munitions, and rival Defence of the Realm Acts would be restored with war-time thoroughness. It would be remembered that in modern war the first blow must be struck as shatteringly and unexpectedly as possible at the enemy's most vital positions: the capital cities would therefore be nearly depopulated and the citizens who remained would not dare to go to bed without their gas-masks.

As for the cliques accused of exciting the suspicion because of their professional interest in increased armaments, their political influence is absurdly exaggerated. The whole suspicion-theory is fallacious. No nation seriously believes its neighbours capable of unprovoked assault; no nation would intentionally provoke a neighbour to assault; no nation is morally strong enough to face without a shudder the imminent prospect of modern war. What is the reason, then, that they all, with the exception of Denmark, Luxembourg, San Marino and one or two more, behave as if war were sooner or later, though perhaps rather later than sooner, to be forced upon them?

The answer is to be found in the recent increase of nationalistic sentiment; in Europe and the Near East the peace treaties resurrected a number of independent nations that had disappeared from the map for hundreds of years. Every independent nation, old or new, is, by

definition, jealous of its Prestige; the articles of which are flags, national anthems, salutes between warships, exchange of foreign decorations, official welcomes to visiting representatives, protection of nationals resident abroad, precedence claimed for ambassadors, seats near the head of the table at international conferences, and the rest. But these are only the articles; what is the emotional base?

It is a primitive and sentimental claim made on behalf of each nation by its citizens: 'Our people are as healthy, as industrious, as well organised, as thrifty, as good-looking as any in the world. Our natural beauties are unrivalled. We boast as good poets, saints, inventors and philosophers as any other nation. Our public buildings are as stately, our fields as fertile and above all *if a picked army of any rival nation were to meet an equal force of our men on a neutral battle-ground with fair fighting on both sides, we claim that our men would be neither out-generalled, out-manœuvred nor out-fought. Man for man, we are a match for the world. We demand the respect due to us. . . .*'

Fighting in man is as ineradicable an instinct as love, with which of course it has much in common: the chief common quality being romanticism, without which love would be mere sexual convenience and fighting either necessary slaughter or unavoidable self-defence. To most men the idea of submitting questions of honour to arbitration is as distasteful as would be that of having their love-affairs regulated by a committee of eugenic experts. Nationalism is inevitably romantic. The statesman who has suggested that his country is 'Too proud to fight' when its prestige has been threatened will not remain long in office if he persists in this early Christian spirit.

When a Northland mob parades outside the Southland Embassy, breaks windows and throws refuse at the ambassador, Southland cannot be expected merely to go to law about this incident. It will not be content to be awarded at Geneva or The Hague the price of the broken glass and a new suit of clothes for the Ambassador. It must demand satisfaction. In other words, it must be prepared for war of a sort. Northland has air-squadrons, tanks, twelve-inch guns, poison-gas apparatus and similar weapons: Southland must either be prepared to fight with the same (or deadlier) weapons or swallow the insult.

In fact, it is now clear that what the million responsible citizens want is not modern war itself, a suicidal destructiveness, but the feeling that if their national prestige is threatened they will be able to insist on an apology, or to show their inflexible pride by the gesture of declaring war in the traditional way. Unfortunately they have now no choice as to the sort of war to declare: it must be a modern war. And, as I say, they do not really want a modern war. Their feeling against it is even stronger than the traditional war-instinct. That is why they concentrate, preventatively, on intimidation by increased armaments, air-pageants, Royal tournaments, naval, military and combined manœuvres. They remember an ancient tag about preparing for war if one wants peace. That is what armaments really mean nowadays.

To take the immediate instance of Mussolini. He fought in the Italian ranks during the War and had such typical trench experiences on the Austrian front that it is unlikely that he has a better opinion of modern war than any other ex-service man. Yet how are we to account for his recent bellicose speeches and for Italy's claim for naval

parity with France? Mussolini cannot possibly suppose that France intends to annex his country? No; he is simply a fanatically loyal Italian who feels it his duty to assert, at all costs, the prestige of Italy as a world-power, second in pride to none. He must force the elder nations to forget any contemptuous associations that the name Italy may conjure up with spaghetti, rags, ruins, bad sanitation, official corruption, beggars, terrorist societies, a degenerate aristocracy, organ-grinders and ice-cream. A prestige equal to that of Imperial Rome, he holds, must be won by national improvement of plant, method and personnel, by discipline, by adventurous deeds, by wearing the sword loose in the scabbard. Kaiser Wilhelm II once had the same ambitions for Germany, whose imperial prestige had been, he thought, too long slighted by the inconsiderate objection of England, France and the United States to German overseas expansion. But that was before modern war had been properly tried out. I do not believe that France is made uneasy by Mussolini's speeches, by his naval estimates, or even by his colonial ambitions in Asia Minor and North Africa. Neither Italy nor France can afford a war. Mussolini has a wide margin of safety for inflammatory speech-making.

Here, while remembering that national honour is still unappeasable except by a romantic appeal to war, let us note briefly the universal conclusions that the war of 1914-18 forced:

(1) The only way in which modern war can be said to settle disputes is by causing such widespread distress and disorder that beside it the causes of dispute finally appear trivial and are forgotten.

(2) The enormous majority of combatants do not enjoy modern war and are not voluntarily enlisted.
(3) Non-combatants and neutrals suffer severely.
(4) Intellectual and moral values and the freedom of the individual are necessarily suspended during the course of a modern war.
(5) The death-rate is excessive.
(6) Honour at the end remains unsatisfied.
(7) Each modern war makes such improvements in the mechanical technique of killing that the physical and mental qualities of the individual fighter are more and more discounted. It has come to the point when any not over-bright schoolboy or schoolgirl favourably posted with a concealed machine-gun and a few belts of ammunition can speedily rout a squadron of the most highly-trained cavalry in Europe.

Of all these objections against war, the most serious is, I believe, this last. The romantic 'man-for-man' fighting claim which is the occasion for declaring war is given no chance of proof. War is, in fact, no longer fighting in any true sense. Compared with the casualties due to promiscuous shelling, gassing and machine-gunning of trenches and encampments from a distance—'mechanical attrition'—those due to hand-to-hand fighting or even to aimed rifle fire have become inconsiderable. War is slaughter, not fighting; yet if we are to be loyal citizens of our nation we must still be romantically prepared to fight for the nation's honour. What way out of the difficulty does anyone suggest? How can one fight except in war?

International socialists suggest as a way out that world-prestige should be substituted for national prestige. This is no solution. Internationalism is excellent as an econo-

mic ideal, for the reduction of tariffs, control of the world's food-supplies, the establishment of world weather-bureaux, world lighthouse services, world medical research pools, and so on. But as an emotional idea it is useless. The only conceivable occasion on which world-loyalty could be even a temporary substitute for national loyalty would be a discovery that the moon was inhabited and preparing an armada for the invasion of the earth.

The logical conclusion is, therefore, that the only possible alternative to a wasteful competition in modern-war armaments is the general adoption of a bloody but comparatively unobjectionable substitute for modern war, a duel of hand-to-hand fighting between picked national forces, that would be formal, chivalrous and primitive enough to satisfy the most old-fashioned definitions of national honour. Such warfare would be supplementary to the international arbitration-courts where economic disputes and disputes other than questions of honour come up for decision, and would be fought under international agreement and strict supervision, by a code that would embody all that is best in savage, mediæval and early-modern warfare and in modern sport.

It must be a sort of warfare, it is clear, in which the element of chance is not great, in which the traditional fighting virtues play the chief part. It must be a war in which only volunteers engage and non-combatants and neutrals do not suffer; in which the battleground, the numbers of the fighters, the possible tactics, the risk of injury, are not unduly restricted. It must be a war that does not adversely affect trade or the prosperity of either country, and in which the freedom of those not actually fighting is in no way curtailed. It must not be a noisy war (the

most wearing physical element of modern war is noise). It must allow room for that exercise of chivalry or sportsmanship which in modern war is generally acknowledged to be folly. It must have pageantry, movement and excitement; but the damage to property must be limited, and the signs of victory must be more satisfying than the mere shooting of a football into a net, the dislodging of bails from a wicket or the award of a silver cup. It must be a full and final satisfaction for national honour whether the nation is defeated or victorious. It must, in fact, be war that falls somewhere between a football match with large numbers of players on each side and an eighteenth-century battle.

The objection to this argument is 'Reformed war is impossible at this stage in the history of warfare: it is not deadly enough.' The reply to this objection is: 'Modern war is also theoretically impossible now: everyone admits that it is too deadly.'

I agree that it is ridiculous to limit the chances and dangers of war by half-hearted measures such as the proposed abolition of the submarine or the actual abolition, in the past, by international agreement, of chain-shot, dum-dum bullets and other detailed terrors. In place of every one dangerous invention ruled out science will soon find a dozen much more dangerous. But if a wholesale abolition of mechanical contrivances in war were agreed upon, and the simplest possible non-mechanical weapon standardised—as the size of cricket bats, weight of golf-balls and boxing-gloves, and the proper studding of football-boots have been standardised—there would not be room for further inventiveness except in the improved tactical use of such a weapon.

A further objection to reformed war will be that 'war is war,' meaning that once war is declared it is impossible to prevent combatants on either side from violating all their ordinary ideas of humane or chivalrous conduct towards individuals. The reply to this is that the objection only applies to modern war. Brigadier-General F. P. Crozier, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., a professional soldier, the son and grandson of professional soldiers, and one of the most courageous and successful senior-officers who fought in France, has recently declared himself[1] against modern war, chiefly on the ground that it has become so mechanised and horrible now that the only way to hold men at the business of blindly slaughtering each other is to 'keep them up to the vicious scratch' by a definite brutalising system and by a careful propaganda campaign of lying about the enemy atrocities. But for such a system – distasteful to every soldier who calls himself a man of honour – there would be fraternisation and non-co-operative mutinies, and the war would end unofficially after the first engagement. Whatever sentiments of honour inspire the declaration of modern war it can only be won through organised dishonour.

But in an age when such a high standard of civic obedience, good humour and sportsmanship *within* the nation has been attained, is it ridiculous to suppose that if a code of reformed warfare were instituted, in which an assertion of honour was the whole excuse and purpose of declaring war, the combatants would not behave with even greater chivalry and propriety than on the football field? For it is not as though 'war' had always been 'war'

[1] *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land.*

in the sense of the modern proverb. State-organised frightfulness in war is an innovation in Europe.

In Froissart's *Chronicles* one is constantly meeting examples of what would be now called 'sporting behaviour'; of knights, who had fought gallantly and been taken prisoners when wounded, set free without the demand for a ransom and escorted home with rich gifts from their captors; of challenges to single combat given and taken, and the affairs punctiliously carried out without mob-interference. In eighteenth-century wars on the Continent the same tradition survived to some extent: rival commanders would take off their hats when the lines of battle halted close to each other and cry 'Gentlemen, do us the honour of firing first!' If such a spirit could be found in an age of general ruffianism and banditry it could certainly be re-created now. It is not even as though chivalry were a solely European ideal. The Chinese, Japanese and Indians knew it long ago. The Red Indians knew it. The Maoris knew it. In fact, war as slaughter rather than as an honourable sport has rarely been practised among savage or semi-civilised people.

Reformed war, should, I suggest, be fought between equal forces of unpaid volunteers, chosen by their nation as excelling in the fighting qualities—in strength, speed, cunning, endurance, honour, discipline, courage. The forces engaged should not be too great or too small; perhaps the ideal wars would be fought between armies of two or three or at the most five thousand men a side. The area of manœuvres should be large—perhaps a thousand square miles—and in a sparsely inhabited region with rivers, hills and woods as tactical conveniences. A campaign should not last more than a fortnight or three weeks

and should be fought in a neutral country, with neutral umpires playing the part of mediæval heralds.

The object of each army would be the capture of as many as possible of the enemy and of their company banners and regimental flags. The agreed and standardised weapon would probably be the quarter-staff, used under different names for friendly warfare all over the world, and the only armour worn would probably be a padded wicker-helmet and a loin-protector. No modern apparatus such as wireless signalling sets, barbed wire entanglements or telescopes would be permitted. An enemy when overpowered would be handcuffed and handed over as a prisoner to the safe-keeping of neutral guards. When the campaign closed victory would be awarded to the side with the greater number of combatants in the field or with the loss of the fewer standards. Prisoners with broken bones or other serious injuries would not be counted among the trophies; the treatment of and compensation for their injuries would be the charge of the enemy company responsible; this would discourage unnecessary violence. For every soldier accidentally killed—for capturing not killing would be the object of the fight—twenty of the enemy would have, in honour, to count themselves captured and leave the field, and heavy compensation would be awarded.

The campaign would begin formally with a declaration of war by the representative of the insulted nation, the representative of the opposing nation picking up the glove thrown down by him. It would end with a ceremonial embrace between these two. The banners and standards would be brilliantly-worked trophies and the soldiers of every company, representing some county,

city or state of their nation, would wear their own peculiar costumes. General engagements would be fought to the accompaniment of battle-cries and martial music. Captured prisoners and standards would be returned when peace was signed.

A nation, like Japan, whose citizens tended to be small, would have the privilege of demanding that any forces opposed to its own should be below an agreed height. Many sorts of fighting would be barred and any company found using them would be branded with international dishonour — the use of hand or missile weapons other than the quarter-staff, the use of fire, the use of the teeth in close fighting or any wilful attempt to maim. Attempts to extort information from prisoners would also be held in the highest degree dishonourable.

Every soldier would have to be a trained scout, wrestler, quarter-staff-man, signaller, tactician, mountaineer, swimmer and long-distance runner. Only men of the highest sense of honour would be admitted into any national army, and military training would be a severe one. The romantic boast 'we are, man for man, better fighters than you,' that lies behind modern competition in armaments, would at last be provided with a practical and harmless test.

Reformed war, of some such sort as this, childish though it may seem, is the only logical substitute for the modern war in which nobody now believes. Nationalism is a primitive, or, if you will, a childish sentiment. It is better to be admittedly childish and play the game of national honour in as romantic and innocuous a way as honour allows, than to pretend to be sophisticated and be ready to commit moral, mental and economical suicide by playing the same game with the most universally destructive

weapons that come to hand. I suggest that the first reformed war should be fought on Swedish territory — admirably suited to manœuvre — between Italy and France, those two most glory-loving powers. The Nobel Peace Prize Committee could undertake the task of drawing up an experimental code.

PPS. — Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* satisfy me completely, as his *Foxhunting Man* did not. The puppet-author, 'George Sherston,' though adequate to the satirical hunting-scenes, was too single-strand a character to do justice to the complicated nexus of Siegfried Sassoon at war. My account of S. S. in *Good-bye* was by way of a challenge to him to tell the story straightforwardly. If this is his answer, good. This time it is Sassoon himself writing, whatever he calls himself. I cheerfully take my slap as the unsoldierlike, tactless, absent-minded, fidgety, egotistical 'David Cromlech' with his 'nose for the nasty,' and his 'habit of putting everyone's back up.' One thing remains to be said: S. S. believes that I lied when I sidetracked his defiance of the military authorities — his protest, with which I agreed sincerely, against the continuance of the War — by swearing that if he persisted he would be put not into the witness-box at a court-martial, but into a padded cell. I did not lie, unless to present an unofficial but authoritative warning as an official decision. I had learned, after discreet enquiry, that the authorities could not afford to court-martial him, for fear of the anti-war publicity, particularly in view of his magnificent fighting record. His neurasthenia, which was, as it happened, accompanied by hallucinations, would make things easy for them, I was told.

OLD PAPA JOHNSON

In July 1916 I was in hospital with one Captain H. H. Johnson of the Army Service Corps, who had a habit of referring to himself in the third person as Old Papa Johnson. I was in for a lung-wound, and he for a badly fractured pelvis. 'Of all the inappropriate happenings!' he said. 'Imagine, Old Papa Johnson of all people being laid out by the kick of an Army mule in the middle of a European War!' He added, to remove any misunderstanding, 'No, the A.S.C. isn't my corps, except just now for a convenience. I'm cavalry, really—did fifteen years off and on in the Lancers. I was with them at Le Cateau and got wounded. And then rejoined them at Ypres and got it again. This time it was shell not bullet, and the medical board gave me "Permanently unfit for Combatant Service." So I transferred to the A.S.C.—yes, I know you fire-eating young infantry-officers look down on that worthy corps—and I hadn't any great passion for acting as baker's boy and butcher's delivery-man myself. Still, it was better than being in England. But now that ridiculous mule. . . .'

Papa Johnson was about forty-five years old; very broad shoulders, medium height, I judged (but it was difficult to judge the vertical height of a man whom one only saw in a horizontal position), and a comedian's face. I only once saw it as anything but a comedian's face, and that was when a hospital orderly was impertinent. Then it set hard as stone, and his voice, which was ordinarily a comedian's voice, too, rasped like a drill-instructor's; the

orderly was terrified. Papa Johnson talked the most idiotic patter half the time and kept the nurses in hysterics. I had to ask him once to stop it, because it was bad for my lung to laugh like that; it might start hæmorrhage again. He had a small make-up box with a mirror and grease-paints, and an assortment of beards and moustaches. While Sister Morgan was taking his temperature he would get under the blankets with a pocket-torch —the thermometer in his mouth—and when the two minutes were up he would emerge in some new startling character. A handkerchief and a towel were his only other stage-properties. Sister Morgan would take the thermometer from him gravely, and he would say, 'Hello, boys and girls, I'm Queen Victoria as a young wife and mother!' or 'Beware, you wicked old men, I'm the Widow Twankey,' or 'Give ear, O Benjamin, I am Saul the son of Kish in search of his father's asses,' and she couldn't help laughing. And he would insist on talking in character until breakfast came up. Biblical parts were his speciality.

One day I was watching him at work on a complicated paper-cutting trick. He folded a sheet of newspaper this way and that, snipping it very carefully here and there with a pair of nail-scissors; he had told me that when it opened out it was going to be what he called *Bogey Bogey Ceremony in Sumatra*. He was full of tricks of this sort. I quoted a verse of the Psalms at him about it—I forget which it was—and he said, shaking his head at me sorrowfully, 'No, no, no, little Gravey-spoons, you've got that all awry. Never misquote the Psalms of David to Old Papa Johnson, because he knows them all off by heart.' And so he did, as I found when I challenged him, and

Proverbs, too, and St. Mark's Gospel ('it's the one that reads truest to me,' he said, 'the others seem to me to have been played about with by someone who wanted to prove something'), and most of Isaiah and the whole of Job. Also Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. I was astonished. 'Where on earth did you come to learn all that?' I asked. 'At a Jesuit College as a punishment for independence of character?'

'No, no, no; bethink yourself, child. Do Jesuits use the *Sonnets* as a text-book? I learned most of my stuff in the Antarctic—I was on two expeditions there—at times when we got snowed up. Some of it in the Arctic. But I learned most when I was Crown Agent on Desolation Island.'

'Where's that? Is that one of the Fiji group?'

'No, no, no, child. That's in the Antarctic, too. It's the most southerly land under the British flag. The appointment is made yearly—it's well paid, you would say—but others wouldn't agree—£1,000 a year and everything found. Usually a Scot takes it on. The Scots don't mind living entirely alone in a howling wilderness as much as we English do; they are a very, very sane people. But my Scottish predecessor stuck it only for nine months, and I stuck it for two years: you see Old Papa Johnson is just a little bit insane. Always was so, from a child. So he didn't harm there. Besides, he had company for the last ten months.'

'If the island's a wilderness what's the sense of keeping an agent there and wasting all that money on him? Is it just to keep the British claim from lapsing? Mineral deposits waiting for development?'

Johnson carefully laid down his 'Bogey bogey' business

before answering. It was, by the way, a birthday present for Sister Morgan. Johnson went out of his way to be friendly with Sister Morgan, though I couldn't understand why. She was a V.A.D. nurse, middle-aged, incompetent and always trying to play the great lady among the other nurses; they detested her. But with Johnson she behaved very well after a time and I came to like her, though when I was in another ward I had thought her impossible.

'As Crown Agent, I would have you understand, Captain Graves, I had to supervise His Majesty's customs, and keep a record of imports and exports, and act as Postmaster-General and Clerk of the Works, and be solely responsible for maintaining the Pax Britannica in Antarctic Regions—if necessary with a revolver or rope.'

I never knew when Papa Johnson was joking, so I said 'Yes, your Excellency, and I suppose the penguins and reindeer needed a lot of looking after; and what with their sending each other so many picture post-cards and all you must have had your hands full at the office.'

'Hignorance!' snapped Papa Johnson, in the idiotic tones that he used for the Widow Twanky, 'Reindeers hindeed! Hain't no sich hanimals hin hall Hant-harctica. Them dratted reindeers honly hinhabitates *Harctic* hareas. Which there wasn't no penguins neither, not a penguin hon all that hisland. There was prions, and seahawks, and sea-helephants come a-visiting; but they wasn't no trouble, not they.' Then he continued in his usual voice, 'The gross value of imports and exports in the two years I was there amounted to . . . guess, child!' I refused to guess, so he told me that the correct answer was something over one million seven hundred thousand pounds sterling.

'For I should have told you, little Gravey-spoons, that Desolation Island has a harbour which is more or less ice-free for a month or two round Christmas every year. The whalers put in there then. It isn't every ship that can deal, like the *Larssen* can, with an unlimited quantity of whale; so when the smaller ships have more oil than they can manage comfortably and don't want to go back to Norway yet—half the world away—they dump it in barrels on Desolation, in the care of the Crown Agent, and get a chit from him for it. There are big store-caves blasted out of the rock. The oil-tankers come to collect the stuff. Also, a Norwegian company put a blubber-boiling plant on the island for the convenience of its smaller boats—three great metal cauldrons, each about twice the size of this room, and weighing I don't know how many hundred tons. They must have been landed in sections and welded together on the spot; but that was before my time.

'When those fellows came ashore to boil down their blubber I always had a busy time. I had to watch that they didn't pinch Government property or the oil belonging to other ships that I had in bond, or raid my house when my back was turned. I carried my revolver loose and loaded and hardly had time to sleep. But I was the sole representative of His Majesty, and he had given me unlimited power to make laws for the entire period of my stay, and to see that they were kept. After my first experience of a blubber party, which ended in two deaths and a fire, I issued an edict that henceforth Desolation Island was to be the driest as well as the coldest of His Majesty's possessions. I couldn't stop the brutes from boozing themselves silly aboard their own vessels

in the harbour, but I saw to it that not a drop was landed on British soil. (Tough! you wouldn't believe how tough those Norwegian whaling-men were. But their ships'-officers were tougher still and kept them under).

'One day a tanker put in and two unexpected visitors came off her. One of them, a tall fellow with a Guards' Brigade moustache (here Papa Johnson made one up to show me, from his make-up box) and a quarrelsome sort of face (here Papa Johnson made up the sort of face he meant) came up to me and said in superior tones (here Papa Johnson imitated them): "Mr. Henry Johnson, the British Crown Agent, I believe? My name's Morgan, Major Anthony Morgan of the Indian Army. I have come to live here with you. This is Professor Durnsford, who is on the staff of the New York Museum of Natural History," and he pulled forward a harmless-looking little fellow with a snub nose and the expression of a Pekinese, "We intend to do research work here." He handed me an introductory letter from the Government of New Zealand. I was too busy with customs business to read it, so I put it into my pocket and said—you see I disliked the man at first sight and didn't like having his company forced on me without a please or thank-you—"Well, I can't refuse you, I suppose, if you have decided to dwell among me. There's my house; it's the only one on the island. Make yourselves at home while I attend to these papers. I'll send your stuff ashore when I've examined it."

'Morgan flared up. "You will certainly do no such thing as to tamper with my personal luggage." I shrugged my shoulders, and said: "It's my job; I'm Customs here. Give me your keys." He saw that I was serious, and real-

ised that while the tanker was still in the harbour and able to take him off, I could refuse to put him up at my house, and so he would have to go back in her. He threw me the keys with very bad grace, and Durnsford politely handed me his. They were numbered keys so I had no trouble finding the right boxes for them.

'That evening I cooked the supper and Morgan got a mess-kit out of his tin trunk to eat it in. The man Morgan actually tried to old-soldier Papa Johnson with his row of ribbons. And do you know which they were? Child, one was the Coronation ribbon and one was the Durbar ribbon and one was the Osmanieh, which one gets in Egypt almost as a matter of routine if one is seconded to the Egyptian Army, and the fourth and last was the M.V.O. of the Third Class. So pretending to be dazzled I went off with the frying pan in my hand and changed into my old campaigning tunic, which sported Ashanti, Egypt, China, King's and Queen's medals South Africa, and North-West Frontier. Not a routine ribbon among them; they made his display look pretty sick. But I had only two stars up, so he tried to high-hat me with his crown.

'Believe me, child, there was the deuce to pay about my embargo on wines and spirits; he had brought out twenty cases of Scotch. He didn't realise at first that Scotch was not drunk on Desolation Island. He said that in his opinion it would have been courteous of me, perhaps, to have put a bottle of my own stuff on the table, since I had not taken off any of his with the first boat-load. But when I explained how it was he went up in the air and bellowed at me as though he was in his Orderly Room and I was a poor devil of a Sudanese recruit. I

won't repeat what he said, child, because a nurse might come in and catch a word or two and misunderstand. I was pleasant but firm; reminding him that I was Lord Chief Justice and Lord High Executioner and everything else on the island and that what I said went. Professor Durnsford had been a witness to his threats, I said, and I would subpœna him, if necessary, for the trial. And I quoted *Alice in Wonderland:* "I'll be judge, I'll be jury," said cunning old Fury, "I'll try the whole cause and condemn you to death."

'"You can't prevent me bringing it ashore," he said at last.

'"Can't I?" I said, in nasty tones, showing him my Colt.

'He broke out in worse language than ever and the only true things he said about me were that I must be a little insane and that I had a face like Dan Leno on one of his off-nights. He ended, "Remember these words, for they are the last I shall address to you while I remain on this island." I answered, improving on poor Dan Leno, "Ha, Comma, Ha, among the trumpets. I'm Job's war-horse, and I scent the battle from afar."

'Morgan kept it up throughout the meal. If he wanted the salt or beans or mustard when they happened to be right close to my plate he would ask Durnsford, who sat between us, to pass them to him. I had decided to ship Morgan back home with his whisky the very next day, but when he started this baby game of sending me to Coventry I was so pleased that I decided to keep him with me. I love baby-games, as you know, child. It was a nice game, because Morgan and I held the cards and Durnsford was pool for the winner to take. Not that I cared much about Durnsford then, but he seemed a decent

little Pekinese of a man, too good to go coupled with an ill-tempered great mastiff like Morgan. They had arranged to come on this expedition together, by letter, before actually meeting. Morgan had written that he could get permission from the New Zealand Government for them both to put up at my house; and Pekey Durnsford was glad of a companion. Neither of them had been in the Antarctic before.

'Durnsford was the best possible "Kitty" for our game of nap; he tried to be so neutral. Of course, I didn't go out of my way to make myself pleasant to him; that would have been no sort of game—an auction with the bidding in sugar-plums and the prize to go to the man who bid highest. No, no, no! I answered his questions civilly, though not always pertinently, I supplied him with necessaries and saw that he didn't run into danger: but I allowed him no loose conversation. Little Pekey Durnsford felt ever so uncomfortable (and even, I believe, went so far as to ask Morgan to apologise to me) but I felt perfectly happy. You see, child, having got accustomed to the deathly silence of Desolation Island when I was by myself for months at a time, I thoroughly enjoyed the very lively silence of the man Morgan. Often he was on the point of asking me something important about the Island, which only I could tell him, but then his naughty pride choked the question back. And so next day the question would come innocently enough through Durnsford. I would put on my "Schoolgirls we" voice and say, "Darling, that's a *great* secret. But if you promise *on your honour* never to tell anyone else in the world about it, I'll whisper it to you." Durnsford would smile unhappily, and Morgan would scowl.

'There were several rooms in my shack but they were mostly store-rooms, and there was only one big stove. Morgan made a show of moving his belongings into another room; but he got too cold and had to sneak back. It was a log-built shack, by the way, with steel doors and steel window-shutters. It had an air-tight lining and it was anchored down to the rock with four great steel cables that went right across the roof. Understand, child, that in the Antarctic we keep a special and unique sort of blizzard, so these were necessary precautions.

'Well! The oil-tanker had steamed off and the whalers had come and dumped their barrels and had their blubber-parties and said good-bye; so unless there came a chance call from a vessel that was built pretty sturdy against the ice—like the one that my predecessor went away in—he was killing himself with Scotch, you see, and couldn't lay off it—nobody at hand to tell him not to make a beast of himself—unless a chance vessel called, you see, we were there together for another nine or ten months solid. I had a wireless apparatus, but it hadn't much of a range, and it was rarely I picked up a passing ship except in the season.

'For five solid months the man Morgan kept it up' (here Papa Johnson resumed the moustache which had fallen off). ' "Durnsford, old fellow, do you think that you could prevail on that comedian friend of yours to disencumber the case he's sitting on? It happens to contain the photographic plates. He has apparently taken a three years' lease of it, with the option of renewal. Haw! Haw! Haw!" Durnsford looked at me apologetically. I didn't get off the packing-case, of course. . . . I never asked Durnsford to relay a message to Morgan. I pre-

tended he didn't exist, and if he had been sitting on the packing case and I had wanted anything inside it, I would simply have opened it with him on it. He was afraid of me and avoided starting a rough house.

'They didn't get on too well with their natural history studies, because they didn't know where to look. I knew my island well and there's a surprising amount of life on it, when you know where to look for it. Besides the prions and the other creatures I mentioned before, which don't take much finding, and a few rat-like animals that spend most of their life hibernating; and even a few honest-to-God birds. In the interior are fresh-water pools with all sorts of little bugs living in the ice. Heaven knows how they keep alive, but when you thaw them out they wriggle nicely. Durnsford didn't know that I knew and I didn't let on; his big friend took him round to see the sights, but he wasn't by any means so good a guide as Old Papa Johnson would have been.

'One day, it was twelve-noon on Midsummer Eve with the thermometer forty-five below and the stars shining very prettily — you have heard of our beautiful long Polar night, I expect, that goes on month after month without a spot of daylight to help it out. Well, one day — or one night, if you like — after breakfast — or after supper if you like — the man Morgan puts on his snow-shoes and says to Durnsford: "Coming out for a shuffle, professor?" "All right, Major," Durnsford answers, putting down his book and reaching for his snow-shoes.

'"Durnsford," I said, "don't go out!" He asked "why?" in a surprised voice, so I said, "look at the barometer!" Morgan interrupted, saying to Durnsford, "Your imbecile acquaintance has no understanding of baro-

meters. This one has been rock-steady for the last twenty-four hours.

'"Durnsford," I said again, "don't go out!" Morgan haw-hawed, "Oh, don't listen to it; come along for a bit of exercise. Leave old Red Nose with his string of sausages and his red hot poker; he's not in his best vein these days." Durnsford hesitated, with one snow-shoe already on. He hesitated quite a long time. Finally, he took it off again. "Thank you, Mr. Johnson," he said, "I'll take your advice. I don't know what you mean about the barometer, but you must certainly understand conditions here better than Major Morgan." That was good to hear; I had won my game of nap with the man Morgan at last and scooped the Kitty. And it wasn't bluff: the unnatural steadiness of the barometer meant trouble. I had made sure that the shutters were fast some hours before.

'So Morgan went out alone, whistling, "Oh, it's my delight on a starry night in the season of the year," and two minutes later a creaking and groaning and humming began. Durnsford looked puzzled and thought I was playing a trick. "No," I said, "It's only the house moving about a little and the cables taking the strain. A cap-full of wind. But have a look at that rock-steady barometer." He went over to it, and behold! the creature had gone quite off its chump and was hopping about. Durnsford was silent for a minute or two and then he said: "Johnson, I know that the Major has behaved abominably to you. But don't you think——?" "No, dearie," I said, "your dear old Granny is very, very sleepy at the moment, and simply hasn't got it in her to think thoughts about troublesome majors and the like of that."

"'Oh, stop your jokes, for once!" he shouted, "I'm going out to look for him." He grabbed his shoes again. So I spoke to him severely and showed him my gun. I said that I didn't mind him killing himself if he insisted, but that I did draw the line at him killing Old Papa Johnson at the same time. They were double doors; the outer one was steel and the inner one solid two-inch oak planking, with an air-lock between them. The moment he unbolted the outer door the wind would get into the air lock and blow the inner one in and then tear the shack to pieces in three seconds.

'"But the Major?" he gasped. "Won't he get frozen to death?"

'"Your intelligent friend was killed by the first gust of wind a few seconds after leaving the shack," I said.

'That blizzard blew without stopping for seventy-two hours; I expected the cables to go any moment. I set myself to learn the Book of Ruth to keep my mind from dwelling on our imminent fate. Then it stopped as suddenly as it began. We found the body only fifty yards from the shack, wedged between two rocks. And you wouldn't believe it, but that blizzard had got inside one of those big metal cauldrons — twice the size of this room, I'm telling you — and blown it clean into the harbour! As local registrar of births, deaths, and marriages I reported all these occurrences to a distant whaler, a month or two later, and when the tanker eventually turned up, it came with a letter from the man Morgan's sister, asking me to put her brother's remains in the lead coffin which she enclosed. So I had to dig them up again, though I had said the burial-service over them and left nothing out.

'As for Pekey Durnsford, he was so full of gratitude to me for saving his life that he slobbered all over me. And soon I found that he liked silly games, just like I did. It was he who first taught Old Papa Johnson how to do this paper-folding business, though Papa's improved on Pekey's methods a lot since. And in return Papa showed him where to scare up all the living creatures in our kingdom. Pekey found one quite new species of fresh-water cheese-mite which he called Something-or-other Papa-johnsonensis. And you should have seen the letter of thanks that I got from the New York Museum of Natural History!

'Morgan's sister — now, child, for goodness' sake don't remind her who H. H. Johnson is — I recognised her handwriting when she put my name on the fever-chart — she's not a bad woman in spite of her airs, though it's taken me three weeks and a lot of patience to coax her to be my playmate. And do you know, little Gravy-spoons? if it hadn't been for that whisky business I verily believe that Old Papa Johnson could even in time have made a playmate of her bad-tempered brother.'

I SHOULD explain that Tom's father was a respectable chemist in Birmingham, an old-style Christian Socialist, and so Tom, who went as day-boy to a local grammar-school (not as a boarder to a public-school) and did brilliantly and came up to Oxford with a scholarship and had no friends there except among the serious Labour crowd at Ruskin College, was surprisingly ignorant of certain perverse but familiar facts of life. He came one day to borrow my French dictionary. I asked him what he wanted to look up. 'Just the name of a fruit,' he said carelessly and turned to the letter M. It was only a small dictionary, so he could not find the word; but he told me the story of how he had heard it.

'A month ago,' he said, 'I was in Paris for a week-end, and I was sort of wandering about looking at things the evening I arrived — I had never been in Paris before. I walked steadily in one direction until I came to a very poor quarter — I don't know where it was because I can't talk conversational French, or hardly at all, though I took honours in French at Birmingham — but it was somewhere in the northern part. The streets were very narrow and full of garbage. After a time I came on two policemen: they were busy kicking a man who was lying in the gutter. The man had a pretty long wound in his scalp and looked bad; certainly he hadn't any fight left in him. So I ran forward and took a flying kick at the bigger of the two policemen, from behind, and sent him sprawling, and then I took a standing kick at the other and sent him sprawling,

too. They were lovely kicks; I learned them from watching Dorrell of "The Villa" in the League matches. They saw I was angry so they ran away.

'I wasn't wearing a hat — I never do — and had a muffler round my neck so the man's friends came up from where they had been hiding in a doorway — they were Communists — and began embracing me and slapping me on the back. When I answered in English they were surprised at first, but said "Vous êtes bon camarade, tout de même." They explained that they hadn't attacked the policemen, because they carried revolvers and usually weren't afraid to use them. All this was all right for me, so we went to a pub and they gave me coffee — I don't drink, of course. The brother of the man whom I had rescued came up later. He was a printer's foreman, he told me, and could talk a little English. He told me how grateful he was and offered to show me the sights of Paris. So first he took me round the slum part — my God! it *was* a filthy place. It even beat what I saw when I was helping with that survey of housing conditions in Glasgow for the Labour Research Bureau. "Well, now let's look at the pretty part of it," I said. "I'll find the money." He laughed and said that we must disguise ourselves first as good bourgeoisie. So I went back to my hotel and changed and met him later over at Montmartre. He was a big hefty fellow and looked magnificent; he had borrowed a dinner jacket from another brother who was a waiter; and for a joke he had put a ribbon of the Legion of Honour in the button-hole to make it look better.

'We went to a revue called *La Revue Ultra-Nue*, and it was; I don't care for that sort of thing so we didn't stay

there long. Then he took me to see a fashionable *maison tolérée*. His sister was the concierge there, so it didn't cost us anything to go in and we had some champagne with the women who happened to be disengaged; my friend explained that I was not a customer but a serious young man studying social conditions. The women were all communists, so we got on well together; they were quite simple about their profession: "il faut vivre," they said, shrugging, and one of them who was an Italian — I talk a little Italian, you know — told me what their ambitions were. They would save up for five or six years until they had put by quite a decent sum and could retire. It was a house frequented by Americans, and Madame la Propriétaire, though a Royalist, was a decent sort, and didn't take too high a percentage of their earnings. So when they had put by so-and-so many francs — it came to about £500 I reckoned — they would advertise for a husband in the matrimonial papers. "Jeune Fille Avec Tâche Désire Mari Affectueux," and be sure to find a good one. "Avec Tâche" means "slightly soiled." "And after all," said the Italian girl, "this is the best possible school to learn 'comment se plaire à son mari.' Men are all the same."

'Then we went to a wrestling match, and there were two enormously fat practically naked men rolling about on the floor. They were carefully greased, so that they couldn't get a decent hold of each other, but at last one did and began slowly breaking the other fellow's arm. I couldn't bear to wait for the crack! so we went out. The filthy look on the faces of the young bloods who were watching!

'Then we watched the crowd coming out of the Opera, and my friend spat and muttered *Assassins!* There was

one absolute caricature-group of four men with opera hats and monocles and canes and I said, "Let's follow them." So we followed them to a swell restaurant; it was a dreadful place, all plush and mirrors and Salon pictures of nymphs and satyrs. We sat in a corner and my friend ordered oysters and said something to the waiter: it was a secret communist password or something because when I paid for the oysters with a twenty-franc note, I got twenty francs change.

'Well, we sat there and I watched the four comics with the corner of my eye while my friend told me all the ins and outs of communism. Apparently he was an important official of the party; I had noticed that his friends, though they called him Comrade, made it a sort of title. I wish I could have understood it all. He got excited and talked too fast. He told me he had been foreman of a munitions works during the war and *sabotaged* output for two or three years until he had been caught out; then he had had to disappear quick into one of the Apache quarters of Paris where army-deserters lived in a sort of fortress, and the police didn't dare round them up because they knew that they had bombs and rifles and even machine-guns there. At least, that's what I made out of the story.

'While we were talking I saw a chap about my own age — no, he was a bit younger, say about nineteen — looking in at the food in the window. He was a good-looking kid, but he seemed hungry. I was listening to my friend who had his back to the window, and waiting for him to finish the story: then I thought I'd invite the kid in to give him a meal. Well, I was surprised. The eldest-looking of the four comics, a fattish fellow with a falsetto voice,

saw the kid, dashed out of the door and came back, pulling him in. He made him sit down at their table and called to the waiter to lay a place for him. The waiter laid a place, trying not to look furious, but I could see that he was: he was digging the fingers of his disengaged hand into the palm. The kid looked embarrassed but happy at the idea of something to eat. So this fattish fellow put him at his ease by introducing him. It was about an hour after the opera and these comics were half-tight. As he called their names in turn they pulled themselves up unsteadily, and said in a nasty sneering sort of voice: "À votre service, monsieur." One was the Count of something and another the Marquis of something else, and the third was the nephew of the Minister of War. The fat fellow was the editor of one of the chief Royalist papers.

'He called for oysters for the kid, and the kid obviously didn't want oysters, he wanted a big lump of meat and potatoes and cabbages and things. But he ate the oysters in an awkward sort of way, trying not to look hungry: he ate the little bits of brown bread and butter that they serve with them first. Then he wiped his mouth and thanked them. The fat fellow and the nephew of the war minister were talking in Italian about the kid; I couldn't make it out at all. It seemed quite mad to me. They got all soppy and talked about his beautiful eyes, and how strong his body was; they might have been a couple of grandmothers discussing their soldier grand-son just going off with the draft for his military service. The marquis and the count were not interested in the kid. They were talking about women's busts, very seriously and intensely, as though they were in the corset business.

They were making drawings on the table-cloth with the count's gold pencil; they had tried the marquis's fountain pen first, but the ink ran too much to make the pictures look like anything.

'The waiter passed and slipped a piece of paper into my friend's hand. He read it, crumpled it up and stuffed it into his shoe. Then he stopped his story about that morning's fight — I didn't tell you that this was the first of May — in which he had half-killed one Royalist by hitting him on the head with another Royalist — the Royalists had tried to spoil their parade — and began to pay attention to the other table.

'The kid, having had his oysters, wanted to excuse himself, say good-night and go off — probably to sleep in the Bois. He looked as though he needed sleep. But the fat fellow whom they called "Mon cher Victor" wouldn't let him. He said that the little angel, meaning the kid, must have some dessert. I should have said that they had already given him two or three glasses of old brandy and the kid was feeling a bit dizzy, I think. The way he had eaten the brown bread and butter, he can't have had much in his stomach to begin with. Mon cher Victor and the nephew of the war minister had now changed places with the other two and were sitting next to the kid and gently detaining him, holding his arms in a sickly affectionate sort of way.

'Victor called the waiter; the waiter looked angrier than ever, but obviously didn't want to lose his job by refusing to do what he was told. Victor asked him what fruit he had, and he said "Every sort, sir." "Good," said Victor, "and now what angel's food would my little Cupid like to eat." (My friend translated this for me;

I didn't recognise the word "cupidon.") Would he have Guava or Persimmon or Pampelmousse? The kid shook his head.

'"Alors une pêche?"

'"Merci, monsieur!"

'"Alors, ananas?"

'"Merci, merci, monsieur!"

'"Alors, une poire d'Avocado?"

'"Merci, merci, monsieur."

'The kid was almost in tears with embarrassment, gratitude mixed with a rising shame, even fear. The nephew of the war minister had laid his sleek yellow head on the kid's shoulder, and was quoting a bit of French Classical poetry. Victor filled the kid's glass again, and said with some impatience that Monsieur Pierre—Pierre was the kid's name—was remarkably fastidious about his dessert. He went on with the list of fruits—mandarins and medlars and mangoes and God knows what. Then the nephew got hold of Pierre's hand and began admiring it, what strong, firm fingers, what a slender wrist and actually picked it up and began kissing it. It was the funniest thing you ever saw. He was probably the drunkest of the four. The count and the marquis were still discussing busts, but in a very inconsequential way. Victor wasn't so drunk, though.

'Well, at last the kid shouted out in a hysterical but somehow very proud way: "JE SUIS OUVRIER! AU DIABLE AVEC VOS POIRES D'AVOCADO." He tried to get up, but couldn't, because the nephew was clawing on to him and kissing his neck. But Victor did not seem in the least put out; he turned to the waiter and said, "Alors, garçon. De la merde pour ce monsieur." Well, at that my friend

turned quite white. He picked up a carafe of water and, walking over to Victor, broke it over his head. Then he unclasped the nephew, and jerked him backward on to the floor, and grabbing the kid pulled him out; he got him into a taxi that happened to be passing, and off they went at full speed. The waiter had pretended to stop us, but had allowed me to push him over with a bang against a door. As soon as he saw the kid and my friend safe in a taxi he began blowing a police whistle. But the taxi got away, of course. I had thrown a lump of bread at the marquis, which hit him on the cheek, and that made me feel good. It happened that I had only a few hundred yards to go to my hotel, so I escaped all right.

'I never saw my friend again, or the kid. I was thinking of them just now, and wondering what sort of fruit *merde* is. I expect it's a sort of mangold or swede or something insulting.'

THE SHOUT

> Leave off now, I pray you, and speak no more for I cannot abear to hear such incredible lies.
>
> M. Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*
> (tr. W. Adlington).

[This story occurred to me one day while I was walking in the desert near Heliopolis in Egypt and came upon a stony stretch where I stopped to pick up a few misshapen pebbles; what virtue was in them I do not know, but I somehow had the story from them, and three years later found it coming true to me. (True in an undistorted way, of course, with a most important character added, and with the macabre strangeness illuminated.) It is not just literature or an Ufa film-scenario. The asylum cricket-match was played at Littlemore, near Oxford, the sand-hills are those just beyond the Royal St. David's Golf Links at Harlech, though with an added Egyptian cruelty. It will be found that Crossley, when he tells the story, admits that he has varied it each time he has told it; thus, in a way, apologising for its distortions of actual event.]

When we arrived with our bags at the Asylum cricket-ground, the chief medical officer, whom I had met at the house of the friends with whom I was staying, came up to shake hands. I told him that I was only scoring for the Lampton team to-day (I had broken a finger the week before, keeping wicket on a bumpy pitch), and he said, 'Oh, then you'll have an interesting companion.' 'The other scoresman?' I asked. 'Crossley is the most

intelligent man in the asylum,' answered the doctor, 'a wide reader, a first-class chess-player, and so on. He seems to have travelled all over the world. He is here for delusions. His most serious delusion is that he is a murderer. His story is that he killed two men and a woman in Sydney, Australia. The other delusion, which is more humorous, is that his soul is split in pieces — whatever that means. He edits our monthly magazine, he stage-manages our Christmas theatricals, and he gave a most original conjuring performance the other day. You'll like him.'

He introduced me. Crossley, a big man of about forty or fifty, had a queer, not unpleasant face. But he gave me a rather uncomfortable feeling, sitting next to me in the little scoring-box, his black whiskered hands so close to mine; I had no fear of physical violence, only the sense of being in the presence of a man of unusual force, even perhaps, it somehow came to me, of occult powers. It was hot in the scoring-box in spite of the wide window. 'Thunderstorm weather,' said Crossley, 'makes us patients behave even more irregularly than usual.' I asked whether any patients were playing. 'Two of them, this first-wicket partnership. The tall one, B. C. Brown, played for Hants three years ago, and the other is a good club player. There should be a third playing, a fast bowler, but we are dropping him to-day. In weather like this he is apt to bowl at the batsman's head. He is not insane in the usual sense, I have discovered, merely magnificently ill-tempered. The doctors can do nothing with him. He wants shooting, really.' Crossley began talking about the doctor. 'A good-hearted fellow and, for a mental hospital physician, technically well advanced.

He actually studies modern morbid psychology and is fairly well-read up to about the day before yesterday. I have had a good deal of fun with him. He reads neither German nor French, so I keep a stage or two ahead in psychological fashions; he has to wait for the English translations. I invent significant dreams for him to interpret; I find he likes me to put in snakes and apple-pies, so I usually do. He is convinced that my mental trouble is due to the good old "anti-paternal fixation" — I wish it was as simple as that.' Then Crossley asked me whether I could listen to a story at the same time. I said that I could. It was slow cricket.

'My story is true,' he said, 'every word of it. Or, when I say that my story is "true," I mean at least this, that I am telling it in a new way. It is always the same story, but I sometimes vary the climax and even recast the characters. Variation keeps the story fresh and therefore true. If I were always to use the same formula, it would become false. I am interested in keeping the story alive, and it is a true story, every word of it. I know the people in it personally. They are Lampton people.'

We decided that I should keep score of the runs and extras and that he should keep the bowling-analysis, and at the fall of every wicket we should copy from each other. This made story-telling possible. Crossley began:

Richard awoke one morning saying to Rachel, 'But what an unusual dream!' 'Tell it me, my dear,' she said, 'and hurry, because I want to tell you mine.' 'I was having a conversation,' he said, 'with a person (or persons, because he changed his appearance so often) of great intelligence, and I can clearly remember the argument. I never before this remember having been able to remember any argu-

ment that came to me in sleep. Usually my dreams are so different from waking that I can only describe them if I say, "It is as though I were living and thinking as a tree, or a bell, or middle C, or a five-pound note; as though I had never been human." Life there is sometimes rich for me and sometimes poor, but I repeat, in every case so different, that if I were to say, "I had a conversation," or "I was in love," or "I heard music," or "I was angry," it would be as far from the fact as if I tried to explain a problem of philosophy, as Panurge did to Thaumast, in Rabelais, merely by grimacing with my eyes and lips.' 'It is much the same with me,' she said. 'I think that when I am asleep I become, perhaps, a stone with all the natural appetites and convictions of a stone. "Senseless as a stone" is a proverb, but there may be more sense in a stone, more sensibility, more sensitivity, more sentiment, more sensibleness, than in many men and women. And no less sensuality,' she added thoughtfully.

It was Sunday morning so that they could lie in bed, their arms about each other, without troubling about the time; and they were childless, so breakfast could wait. He told her that in his dream he was walking in the sand-hills with this person or persons, who said to him, 'These sand-hills are a part neither of the sea before us nor of the grass links behind us, and are not related to the mountains beyond the links. They are of themselves. A man walking on the sand-hills soon knows this by the tang in the air, and if he were to refrain from eating and drinking, from sleeping and speaking, from thinking and desiring, he could continue among them for ever without change. There is no life and no death in the sand-hills. Anything might happen in sand-hills.' Rachel said that

this was nonsense, and asked, 'But what was the argument? Hurry up!' He said it was about the whereabouts of the soul, but that now she had put it out of his head by hurrying him. All that he remembered was that the man was first a Japanese, then an Italian and then a kangaroo.

Then she eagerly told her dream, gabbling over the words. 'I was walking in the sand-hills; there were rabbits there, too; how does that tally with what he said of life and death? I saw the man and you walking arm-in-arm towards me, and I ran from you both and I noticed that he had a black silk handkerchief; he ran after me and my shoe-buckle came off and I could not wait to pick it up. I left it lying, and he stooped and put it into his pocket.' 'How do you know that it was the same man?' he asked. 'Because,' she said, laughing, 'he had a black face and wore a blue coat like that picture of Captain Cook. And because it was in the sand-hills.' He said, kissing her neck, 'We not only live together and talk together and sleep together, but it seems we now even dream together.' So they laughed. Then he got up and brought her breakfast.

At about half-past eleven, she said: 'Go out now for a walk, my dear, and bring back something for me to think about: and be back in time for dinner at one o'clock.' It was a hot day in middle-May, and he went out through the wood and struck the coast-road, which after half a mile led into Lampton. ('Do you know Lampton well?' asked Crossley. 'No,' I said, 'I am only here for the holidays, staying with friends.') So he went a hundred yards along the coast-road, but then turned off and went across the links: thinking of her and watching the blue butterflies and looking at the heath-roses and thyme, and think-

ing of her again, and how strange it was that they could be so near to each other; and then taking a pinch of gorse-flower and smelling it, and considering the smell and thinking, 'if she should die what would become of me?' and taking a slate from the low wall and skimming it across a pond and thinking 'I am a clumsy fellow to be her husband'; and walking towards the sand-hills, and then edging away again, perhaps half in fear of meeting the person of their dream, and at last making a half-circle towards the old church beyond Lampton, at the foot of the mountain.

The morning service was over and the people were out by the cromlechs behind the church, walking in twos and threes, as the custom was, on the smooth turf. The Squire was talking in a loud voice about King Charles, the Martyr, 'A great man, a very great man,' and the Doctor was arguing over organ-music with the Rector. There was a group of children playing ball. 'Throw it here, Elsie. No, to me, Elsie, Elsie, Elsie.' Then the Rector came up and pocketed the ball and said that it was Sunday; they should have remembered. When he was gone they made faces after him.

Presently a stranger came up and asked permission to sit down beside Richard; they began to talk. The stranger had been to the church service and began to discuss the sermon. The text had concerned the immortality of the soul: the last of a series of sermons that had begun at Easter. The stranger said that he could not grant the preacher's premiss that *the soul is continually resident in the body*. Why should this be so? What duty did the soul perform in the daily routine task of the body? The soul was not the brain, nor the lungs, nor the stomach, nor

the heart, nor the mind, nor the imagination. Surely it was a thing apart? Was it not indeed less likely to be resident in the body than outside the body? He had no proof one way or the other, but he would say: Birth and death are so odd a mystery that the principle of life may well lie outside the body which is the visible evidence of living. 'We cannot,' he said, 'even tell to a nicety what are the moments of birth and death. Why, in Japan, where I have travelled, they reckon a man to be already one year old when he is born; and in Italy lately a dead man—but come and walk on the sand-hills and I will tell you my conclusions. I find it easier to talk when I am walking.'

Richard was frightened to hear this, and to see the man wipe his forehead with a black silk handkerchief. He began to stutter something. At this moment the children, who had crept up behind the cromlech, suddenly at a signal given shouted loud in the ears of the two men; and stood laughing. The stranger was startled into anger; he opened his mouth as if he were about to curse them, and bared his teeth to the gums. Three of the children screamed and ran off. But the one whom they called Elsie tumbled down in her fright and lay sobbing. The doctor, who was near, tried to comfort her. 'He has a face like a devil,' they heard Elsie say. The stranger smiled good-naturedly, 'And a Devil I was not so long ago. That was in Northern Australia, where I lived with the black fellows for twenty years. "Devil" is the nearest English word for the position that they gave me in the tribe; and they also gave me an eighteenth-century British naval uniform to wear as my ceremonial dress. Come and walk with me in the sand-hills and I shall tell

you the whole story. I have a passion for walking in the sand-hills: that is why I came to this town. . . . My name is Charles.' Richard said, 'Thank you, but I must hurry home to my dinner.' 'Nonsense,' said Charles, 'dinner can wait. Or, if you wish, I can come to dinner with you. By the way, I have had nothing to eat since Friday. I am without money.'

Richard felt uneasy. He was afraid of Charles, and did not wish to bring him home to dinner because of the dream and the sand-hills and the handkerchief: yet on the other hand the man was intelligent and quiet and decently dressed and had had nothing to eat since Friday; if Rachel knew that he had refused him a meal she would renew her taunts of his stinginess. When Rachel was out of sorts, her favourite complaint was that he was over-careful about money. When she was at peace with him, she owned that he was the most generous man she knew, and that she did not mean what she said. Yet when she was angry with him again, out came the taunt of stinginess: 'Tenpence-halfpenny,' she would say, 'tenpence-halfpenny and threepence of that in stamps'; his ears would burn and he would want to hit her. So he said now, 'By all means come along to dinner, but that little Elsie is still sobbing for fear of you. You ought to do something about it.' Charles beckoned her to him and said a single soft word; it was an Australian magic word, he afterwards told Richard, meaning *Milk*: and immediately the child was comforted and came to sit on Charles' knee and played with the buttons of his waistcoat for awhile until Charles sent her away. Richard said, 'You have strange powers, Mr. Charles.' Charles answered, 'I am fond of children, but the shout startled me; I am

pleased that I did not do what, for a moment, I was tempted to do.' 'What was that?' asked Richard. 'I might have shouted myself,' said Charles. 'Why,' said Richard, 'they would have liked that better. It would have been a great game for them. They probably expected it of you.' 'If I had shouted,' said Charles, 'my shout would have either killed them outright or sent them mad. Probably it would have killed them, for they were standing close.' Richard smiled a little foolishly. He did not know whether or not he was expected to laugh, for Charles spoke so gravely and carefully. So he said, 'Indeed, what sort of shout would that be? Let me hear you shout.' Charles said, 'It is not only children who would be hurt by my shout. Men can be sent raving mad by it; the strongest man would be flung to the ground. It is a magic shout that I learned from the chief devil of the Northern Territory. I took eighteen years to perfect it, and yet I have used it, in all, no more than five times.' Richard was so confused in his mind with the dream and the handkerchief and the word spoken to Elsie that he did not know what to say, so he muttered 'I'll give you fifty pounds now to clear the cromlechs with a shout.' Charles said, 'I see that you do not believe me. You have never perhaps heard before of the terror-shout?'

Richard considered and said, 'Well, I have read of the hero-shout which the ancient Irish warriors used, that would drive armies backwards; and did not Hector, the Trojan, have a terrible shout? And there were sudden shouts in the woods of Greece. They were ascribed to the god Pan and would infect men with a madness of fear; from which legend indeed the word "panic" has come into the English language. And I remember another shout in

the Welsh *Mabinogion*, in the story of Lludd and Llevelys. It was a shriek that came on every May-Eve and went through men's hearts and so scared them that the men lost their hue and their strength and the women their children, and the young men and maidens their senses, and all the animals and trees, the earth and the waters were left barren. But it was ascribed to a dragon.' 'It must have been a British magician of the dragon totem-clan,' said Charles. 'I was of the Kangaroos. Yes, that tallies. The effect is not exactly given, but nearly enough.' They came to the house at one o'clock, and Rachel was at the door, the dinner just ready. 'Rachel,' said Richard,' 'here is Mr. Charles to dinner; Mr. Charles is a great traveller.' Rachel passed her hand over her eyes as if to dispel a cloud, but it may have been the sudden sunlight. Charles took her hand and kissed it, which surprised her. Rachel was graceful, small, with eyes unusually blue for the blackness of her hair, delicate in her movements, and with a voice rather low-pitched; she had a freakish humour. ('You would like Rachel,' said Crossley, 'she visits me here sometimes.') Of Charles it would be difficult to say one thing or another: he was of middle age, and tall; his hair grey; his face never still for a moment; his eyes full and bright, perhaps yellow, perhaps brown, perhaps grey; his voice changed its tone and accent with the subject; his hands were brown and hairy at the back, his nails well cared for. Of Richard it is enough to say that he was a musician, not a strong man but a lucky man. Luck was his strength.

After dinner Charles and Richard washed up the dishes together, and Richard suddenly asked Charles if he would let him hear the shout: for he thought that he could not

have any peace of mind until he had heard it. So horrible a thing was, surely, worse to think about than to hear: for now he believed in the shout. Charles stopped washing up; dish-mop in hand. 'As you wish,' said Charles, 'but I have warned you what a shout it is. And if I shout it must be in a lonely place where nobody else can hear; and I shall not shout in the second degree, the degree which kills certainly, but only in the first, which terrifies, and when you wish me to stop put your hands to your ears. 'Agreed,' said Richard. 'I have never yet shouted to satisfy an idle curiosity,' said Charles, 'but only when in danger of my life from enemies, black or white, and once when I was alone in the desert without food or drink. Then I was forced to shout, for food.' Richard thought, 'Well, at least I am a lucky man, and my luck will be good enough even for this.' 'I am not afraid,' he told Charles. 'We will walk out on the sand-hills to-morrow early,' Charles said, 'when nobody is stirring; and I will shout. You say you are not afraid.'

Now Richard was very much afraid, and what made his fear worse was that somehow he could not talk to Rachel and tell her of it: he knew that if he told her she would either forbid him to go, or she would come with him. If she forbade him to go, the fear of the shout and the sense of cowardice would hang over him ever afterwards; but if she came with him, either the shout would be nothing and she would have a new taunt for his incredulity and Charles would laugh with her, or if it were something, she might well be driven mad. So he told her nothing. Charles was invited to sleep at the cottage for the night, and they stayed up late talking.

Rachel told Richard when they were in bed that she

liked Charles and that he certainly was a man who had seen many things, but a fool and a big baby. Then Rachel talked a great deal of nonsense, for she had had two glasses of wine, which she seldom drank, and she said, 'O my dearest, I forgot to tell you. When I put on my buckled shoes this morning while you were away I found a buckle missing. I must have noticed that it was lost before I went to sleep last night and yet not fixed it firmly in my mind, so that it came out as a discovery in my dream; but I have a feeling, in fact I am certain, that Mr. Charles has that buckle in his pocket; and I am sure that he is the man whom we met in our dream. But I don't care, not I.'

Richard grew more and more afraid, and he dared not tell of the black silk handkerchief, or of Charles' invitations to him to walk in the sand-hills. And what was worse, Charles had only used a white handkerchief while he was in the house, so that he could not be sure whether or not he had seen it after all. He said lamely, turning his head away, 'Well, Charles knows a lot of things. I am going for a walk with him early to-morrow if you don't mind; an early walk is what I need.' 'Oh, I'll come too,' she said. Richard could not think how to refuse her; he knew that he had made a mistake in telling her of the walk. But he said, 'Charles will be very glad. At six o'clock, then.' At six o'clock he got up, but Rachel after the wine was too sleepy to come with them. She kissed him good luck and off he went with Charles.

Richard had had a bad night. In his dreams nothing was in human terms, but confused and fearful, and he had felt himself more distant from Rachel than he had ever felt since their marriage, and the fear of the shout was gnawing at him. He was also hungry and cold. There was a

stiff wind blowing towards the sea from the mountains and a few splashes of rain. Charles spoke hardly a word, but chewed a grass and walked fast. Richard felt giddy, and said to Charles, 'Wait a moment, I have a stitch in my side.' So they stopped, and Richard asked gasping, 'But what sort of shout is it? Is it loud, or shrill? How is it produced? How can it madden a man?' Charles was silent, so Richard went on with a foolish smile, 'Sound, though, is a curious thing. I remember once, when I was at Cambridge, that a King's College man had his turn of reading the evening lesson. He had not spoken ten words before there was a groaning and ringing and creaking, and pieces of wood and dust fell from the roof; for his voice was exactly attuned to the voice of the building, so that he had to stop, else the roof might have fallen; as you can break wine glasses by playing their note with a violin.'

Charles consented to answer, 'My shout is not a matter of tone or vibration but something not to be explained. It is a shout of pure evil, and there is no fixed place for it on the scale. It may take any note. It is pure terror, and if it were not for a certain intention of mine, which I need not tell you, I would not shout for you.'

Richard had a great gift of fear, and this new account of the shout disturbed him more and more; he wished himself at home in bed, and Charles two continents away. But he was fascinated. They were crossing the links now and going through the bent-grass that pricked through his stockings and was wet. Now they were on the bare sand-hills. From the highest of them Charles looked about him; he could see the sea-beach stretched out for two miles and more. There was no one in sight. Then

Richard saw Charles take something out of his pocket and begin carelessly to juggle with it as he stood, tossing it from finger-tip to finger-tip and spinning it up with finger and thumb to catch it on the back of his hand. It was Rachel's buckle. Richard's breath came in gasps, his heart beat violently and he nearly vomited. He was shivering with cold, and yet sweating. Soon they came to an open place among the sand-hills near the sea. There was a raised bank with sea-holly growing there and a little sickly grass. And all around were strewn stones, brought there, it seemed, by the sea years before. For though the place was behind the first rampart of sand-hills, there was a gap in the line through which a high tide might have broken, and the winds continually sweeping through the gap kept them uncovered of sand. Richard had his hands in his trouser pockets for warmth and was twisting a soft piece of wax around the right forefinger — a candle-end that was in his pocket from the night before when he had gone downstairs to lock the door. 'Are you ready?' asked Charles. Richard nodded.

A gull dipped over the crest of the sand-hills and rose screaming when it saw them there in the hollow. 'Stand by the sea-holly,' said Richard, with a dry mouth, 'and I'll be here among the stones, not too near. When I raise my hand, shout! When I put my fingers to my ears, stop at once.' So Charles walked twenty steps towards the holly. Richard saw his broad back and the black silk handkerchief sticking from his pocket, and he remembered the dream, and the shoe-buckle and Elsie's fear. His resolution broke: he hurriedly pulled the piece of wax in two, and stuffed his ears. Charles did not see him. Charles turned, and Richard gave the signal with his hand.

Charles leaned forward curiously, his chin thrust out, his teeth bared, and never had Richard seen such a look of fear on a man's face before. He had not been prepared for that. Charles' face, that was usually soft and changing, uncertain as a cloud, now hardened to a rough stone mask, dead white at first, and then flushing outwards from the cheek bones red and redder, and at last as black, as if he were about to choke. His mouth then slowly opened to the full, and Richard fell on his face, his hands to his ears, in a faint.

When he came to himself he was lying alone among the stones. He sat up, wondering numbly, had he been there long? He felt very weak and sick, with a chill on his heart that was worse than the chill of his body. He could not think. He put his hand down to lift himself up and it rested on a stone, a larger one than most. He picked it up and felt its surface, absently. His mind wandered. He began to think about shoe-making, a trade of which he had before known nothing, but now every trick was familiar to him. 'I must be a shoemaker,' he said aloud. And then he corrected himself, 'No, I am a musician. Am I going mad?' He threw the stone from him; it struck against another and bounced off. He then asked himself, 'Now why did I say that I was a shoemaker? It seemed a moment ago that I knew all that there was to be known about making shoes and now I know nothing at all about them. I must go home to Rachel. Why did I ever come out?'

Then he saw Charles on a sand-hill a hundred yards away gazing out to sea. He remembered his fear and made sure that the wax was in his ears: he stumbled to his feet. He saw a flurry on the sand and there was a rabbit lying on

its side, twitching in a convulsion. As Richard moved over towards it, the flurry ended: the rabbit was dead. Richard crept behind a sand-hill out of Charles' sight and then struck homeward, running awkwardly in the soft sand. He had not gone twenty paces before he came upon the gull. It was standing stupidly on the sand and did not rise at his approach, but fell over on its side.

How Richard came home he did not know, but here he was opening the back door and crawling upstairs on his hands and knees. He unsealed his ears. Rachel was sitting up in bed, pale and trembling. 'Thank God, you're back,' she said; 'I have had a nightmare, the worst I have ever had. It was frightful. I was in my dream, in the deepest dream of all, like the dream of which I told you. I was like a stone, and I was aware of you near me; you were you, quite plain though I was a stone, and you were in great fear and I could do nothing to help you, and you were waiting for something and the terrible thing did not happen for you, but it happened for me. I can't tell you what it was, but it was as though all my nerves cried out in pain at once, and I was pierced through and through with a beam of some intense evil light and twisted inside out. I woke up and my heart was beating so fast that I had to gasp for breath. Do you think I had a heart attack and my heart missed a beat? They say it feels like that. Where have you been, dearest? Where is Mr. Charles?'

Richard sat on the bed and held her hand. 'I have had a bad experience too,' he said. 'I was out with Charles on the sand-hills and as he went ahead to climb on the highest sand-hill I felt very faint and fell down among a patch of stones, and when I came to myself I was in a

desperate sweat of fear and had to hurry home. So I came running here alone. This happened perhaps half an hour ago,' he said. But he did not tell her more; he asked, could he come back to bed and would she get breakfast? (A thing she had not done all the years they were married.) 'I am as ill as you,' said she. It was understood between them always that when Rachel was ill, Richard must be well. 'You are not,' said he, and fainted again. So she helped him to bed ungraciously and dressed herself and went slowly downstairs. A smell of coffee and bacon rose to meet her and there was Charles, who had lit the fire, putting two breakfasts on a tray. She was so relieved at not having to get breakfast and so confused by her experience that she thanked him and called him a darling, and he kissed her hand gravely and pressed it. He had made the breakfast exactly to her liking: the coffee was strong and the eggs fried on both sides.

Rachel fell in love with Charles. She had often fallen in love with men before and after her marriage, but it was then her habit to tell Richard when this happened, as he agreed to tell her when it happened to him: so that the suffocation of passion was given a vent and there was no jealousy, for she used to say (and he had the liberty of saying), 'Yes, I am *in love* with so-and-so, but I only *love* you.' That is as far as it had ever gone. But this was another matter. Somehow, she did not know why, she could not own to being in love with Charles: for she did not love Richard. She hated him for being ill, and said that he was lazy, and a sham. So about midday he got up, but went groaning about the house and she sent him back to bed to groan.

Charles helped her with the housework, doing all the

cooking, but he did not go up to see the sick man, since he had not been asked to do so. Rachel was ashamed, and apologised to Charles for Richard's rudeness in running away from him. But Charles said mildly that he took it as no insult; he had felt queer himself that morning; it was as though something evil was astir in the air as they reached the sand-hills. She told him that she too had had the same queer feeling. And later she found all Lampton talking of it. The doctor maintained that it was an earth tremor, but the country people said that it had been the Devil passing by. He had come to fetch the soul of old Solomon Jones, the gamekeeper, found dead that morning in his cottage by the sand-hills.

When Richard could get downstairs and walk about a little without groaning, Rachel sent him to the cobbler's to get a new buckle for her shoe. She came with him to the gate. The path through the wood lay beside a steep bank. Richard looked ill and walked with a slight groaning, and Rachel, half in anger, half in fun, pushed him down the bank, where he fell sprawling among nettles and old iron. Then she ran into the house laughing loudly. Charles watched from an upper window. Richard sighed, tried to share the joke against himself with Rachel — but she had gone — heaved himself up, picked the shoes from among the nettles and after awhile walked slowly up the bank and so out of the wood and down the lane in the unaccustomed glare of the sun.

When he reached the cobbler's he sat down heavily. The cobbler was glad to talk to him. 'You are looking bad,' said the cobbler. Richard said, 'Yes, on Friday morning I had a bit of a turn; I am only just now recovering from it.' 'Good God,' burst out the cobbler, 'if you

had a bit of a turn, what did I not have? It was as if someone handled me raw, without my skin. It was as if someone seized my very soul and juggled with it, as you might juggle with a stone, and hurled me away. I shall never forget last Friday morning.' A strange notion came to Richard that it was the cobbler's soul he had handled in the form of a stone. 'It may be,' he thought, 'that the souls of every man and woman and child in Lampton are lying there.' But he said nothing, except about the buckle, and went home.

Rachel was ready with a kiss and a joke; he might have kept silent, for his silence always made Rachel ashamed. 'But,' he thought, 'why make her ashamed? From shame she only goes to self-justification and picks a quarrel over something else and it's ten times worse. I'll be cheerful and accept the joke.' He was unhappy. And Charles was established in the house: gentle-voiced, hard-working, and continually taking Richard's part against Rachel's scoffing. This was galling, for Rachel did not resent it. ('The next part of the story,' said Crossley, 'is the comic relief, an account of how Richard went again to the sand-hills, to the heap of stones, and identified the souls of the doctor and the rector—the doctor's because it lay up against a bottle labelled 'whisky' and the rector's because of its intense blackness—and how he proved to himself that the notion was not fanciful. But I will skip that and come to the point where Rachel two days later suddenly became affectionate and loved Richard, she said, more than ever before.') The reason was that Charles had gone away, nobody knows where, and had relaxed the buckle-magic for the time, being confident that he could renew it on his return. So Richard

was well in a day or two and everything was as it had been until one afternoon the door opened and there was Charles.

He came in without a word of greeting and hung his hat upon a peg. He sat down by the fire and asked, 'What time is supper ready?' Richard looked at Rachel, but Rachel seemed fascinated by the man. She answered, 'Eight o'clock,' in her low voice, and stooping down drew off Charles' muddy boots and found him a pair of Richard's slippers. Charles said, 'Good. It is now seven o'clock. In another hour, supper. At nine o'clock the boy will bring the evening paper. At ten o'clock, Rachel, you and I sleep together.' Richard thought that Charles was mad, and Rachel too. For Rachel said quietly to Charles, 'Why, of course, my dear,' and then viciously she turned to Richard. 'And you run away, little man!' she said, and slapped his cheek.

Richard stood puzzled, nursing his cheek. He could not believe that Rachel and Charles had both gone mad together. He must be mad himself. At all events, Rachel knew her mind, and they had a secret compact together that if either of them ever wished to break the marriage-promise, the other should not stand in the way. They had made this compact because they wished to feel themselves bound together rather by love than by a ceremony. So he said quietly, 'Very well, Rachel. I shall leave you two together.' Charles flung a boot at him saying, 'If you put your nose inside the door between now and breakfast time, I'll shout the ears off your head.' Richard went out this time not afraid, but cold inside and quite clear-headed. He went out through the wood and across the links. There were three hours yet until

sunset. He joked with the boys playing cricket on the school field. He skimmed stones. He thought of Rachel and began to cry. Then he sang to comfort himself. 'Oh, I'm certainly mad,' he said, 'and what in the world has happened to my luck?' He came to the stones. 'Now,' he said, 'I shall find my soul in this heap and I shall crack it into a hundred pieces with this hammer'—he had picked up the hammer from the coal-shed as he came out.

Then he began looking for his soul. Now, a man can recognise the soul of another man or woman but he cannot recognise his own. He could not find it. But Rachel's soul he found at last by chance and knew it. For she was estranged from him or he could not have recognised it. Against it lay another stone, an ugly misshapen stone of a mottled brown. He swore, 'I'll destroy this. It must be the soul of Charles.' And he kissed the soul of Rachel: it was like kissing her lips, and he took the soul of Charles and posed his hammer. 'I'll knock you into fifty fragments!' Then he paused. Richard had scruples. He knew that Rachel loved Charles better than himself. He had made her that promise. A third stone (his own, it must be) was lying the other side of Charles' stone. It was of grey granite and smooth, about the size of a cricket ball. He said to himself, 'I will break my own soul in pieces and that will be the end of me.' The world grew black, the focus of his eyes failed and he all but fainted. But he recovered himself, and with a great cry brought down the coal-hammer crack, crack, and crack on the grey stone. It split in four pieces with a smell like gunpowder: and when Richard found that he was still alive and whole, he began to laugh and laugh. Oh, he was mad,

quite mad! He flung the hammer away, lay down exhausted and fell asleep.

When he awoke the sun was just setting. It must be nearly ten o'clock. He went home in confusion thinking, 'This is a very bad dream and Rachel will help me out of it.' When he came to the edge of the town there was a group of men talking excitedly under a lamp post. One said, 'About eight o'clock it happened, didn't it?' The other said, 'Yes.' A third said, 'Ay, mad as a hatter. "Touch me," he says, "and I'll shout. I'll shout you into a fit, the whole blasted police force of you. I'll shout you mad." And the Inspector says, "Now, Crossley, put your hands up, we've got you cornered at last." "One last chance," says he. "Go and leave me or I'll shout you stiff and dead." '

Richard had stopped to listen. 'And what happened to Crossley then?' he said. 'And what did the woman say?'

' "For Christ's sake," she said to the Inspector, "go away or he'll kill you." '

'And did he shout?'

'He didn't shout. He screwed up his face for a moment and drew in his breath. A'mighty, I've never seen such a ghastly-looking face in my life. I had to take three or four brandies afterwards. And the Inspector he drops the revolver and it goes off; but nobody hit. Then suddenly a change comes over this man Crossley. He claps his hands to his side and again to his heart, and his face goes smooth and dead again. Then he begins to laugh and dance and cut capers. And the woman stares and can't believe her eyes and the police lead him off. If he was mad before, he was just harmless dotty now; and they

had no trouble with him. He's gone in the ambulance to the Royal West County Asylum.'

So Richard went home to Rachel and told her everything and she told him everything, though there was not much to tell. She had not fallen in love with Charles, she said; she was only teasing Richard and she had never said anything or heard Charles say anything at all like what he told her; it was part of his dream. She loved him always and only him, for all his faults; which she went through — his stinginess, his talkativeness, his untidiness. They had had a quiet supper, and she did think it had been bad of Richard to rush out and stay away for three hours like that. Charles might have murdered her. He did start pulling her about a bit in fun, wanting her to dance with him and then there had been the knock on the door, and the Inspector had shouted, 'Walter Charles Crossley, in the name of the King, I arrest you for the murder of George Grant, Harry Grant and Ada Colman at Sydney, Australia.' And then Charles had gone absolutely mad. He had pulled out a shoe buckle and said to it, 'Hold her for me.' And then he had told the police to go away or he'd shout them dead. Then he made a dreadful face at them and went to pieces altogether. 'He was rather a nice man, I liked his face so much, and I'm sorry for him.'

'Did you like that story?' asked Crossley. 'Yes,' said I, busy scoring, 'a Milesian Tale of the best. Marcus Apuleius, I congratulate you.'

Crossley turned to me with a troubled face and hands clenched trembling. 'Every word of it is true,' he said. 'Crossley's soul was cracked in four pieces and I'm a mad-

man. Oh, I don't blame Richard and Rachel. They are a pleasant loving pair of fools and I've never wished them harm; they often visit me here. In any case, now that my soul lies broken in pieces, my powers are gone. Only one thing remains to me,' he said, 'and that is the shout.'

I had been so busy scoring and listening to the story at the same time that I had not noticed the immense bank of black cloud that swam up until it spread across the sun and darkened the whole sky. Warm drops of rain fell: a flash of lightning dazzled us and with it came a smashing clap of thunder.

In a moment all was confusion. Down came a drench of rain, the cricketers dashed for cover, the lunatics began screaming and bellowing and fighting. One tall young man, the same B. C. Brown who once played for Hants, pulled all his clothes off and ran about stark-naked. Just outside the scoring box an old man with a beard began to pray to the thunder, 'Ba! Ba! Ba!' Crossley's eyes twitched proudly. 'Yes,' said he, pointing to the sky, 'that's the sort of shout it is; that's the effect it has; but I can do better than that.' Then his face fell suddenly and became childishly unhappy and anxious. 'Oh Heavens,' he said, 'he'll shout at me again, Crossley will. He'll freeze my marrow.'

The rain was rattling on the tin roof so that I could hardly hear him. Another flash, another clap of thunder even louder than the first. 'But that's only the second degree,' he said in my ear; 'it's the first that kills.'

'Oh,' he said. 'Don't you understand?' He smiled foolishly. 'I'm Richard now, and Crossley will kill me.'

The naked man was running about brandishing a cricket-stump in either hand and screaming: an ugly

sight. 'Ba! Ba! Ba!' prayed the old man, the rain spouting down his back from his up-tilted hat.

'Nonsense,' said I, 'be a man, remember you're Crossley. You're a match for a dozen Richards. You played a game and lost, because Richard had the luck; but you still have the shout.'

I was feeling rather mad myself. Then the doctor rushed into the scoring-box, his flannels streaming wet, still wearing pads and batting gloves, his glasses gone; he had heard our voices raised, and tore Crossley's hands from mine. 'To your dormitory at once, Crossley,' he ordered. 'I'll not go,' said Crossley, proud again, 'you Snake and Apple Pie Man!' The doctor seized him by his coat and tried to hustle him out. Crossley flung him off, his eyes blazing with madness. 'Get out,' he said, 'and leave me alone here or I'll shout. Do you hear? I'll shout. I'll kill the whole damned lot of you. I'll shout the Asylum down. I'll wither the grass. I'll shout.' His face was distorted in terror. A red spot appeared in either cheek and spread over his face.

I put my fingers to my ears and ran out of the scoring-box. I had run perhaps twenty yards, when an indescribable pang of fire spun me about, and left me dazed and numbed. I escaped death somehow; I suppose that I am lucky, like Richard in the story. But the lightning struck Crossley and the doctor dead together; Crossley's body was found rigid, the doctor's was crouched in a corner, his hands to his ears.

The coroner could not understand this, later, because death had been instantaneous, and the doctor was not a man to stop his ears against thunder.

It makes a rather unsatisfactory end to the story to say

that Rachel and Richard were the friends with whom I was staying — Crossley had described them most accurately — but that when I told them that a man called Charles Crossley had been struck at the same time as their friend the doctor they seemed to take Crossley's death very casually by comparison with his. Richard looked blank; Rachel said, 'Charles Crossley? I think he must have been the man who called himself the Australian Illusionist and gave that wonderful conjuring-show the other day. He had practically no apparatus but a black silk handkerchief. I liked his face so much. Oh, and Richard didn't like it at all.' Richard said, 'No, I couldn't stand the way he looked at you all the time.'

PART TWO

A JOURNAL OF CURIOSITIES

(August 23rd to September 30th, 1929)

August 23rd

I once contributed a poem by accident to an American literary magazine. Then someone acting as a scout for a firm of Boston publishers put me in a list of possible gulls for the usual course of exploitation. I knew all about the firm, having previously been shown, by a victim, a typical correspondence in all its stages, from flattery of the author — 'we are much interested in your poem appearing . . .' — to threat of legal action when he kicks at being charged seven hundred and fifty dollars for what he thought was free publication. So I let the correspondence take its slow course, playing the gull as wittily as I could, but giving a great deal of trouble, as well as hope, to the firm. The correspondence went on for months before I gave the sudden knock-out blow. But meanwhile I had got caught in the machinery. My name was on the Gulls' List.

In America, the Gulls' List or Suckers' List has many names, but one of them is Addressees of the Inter-State Mutual Help Mail Order League. These addressees are the sort of idiots who will fall for any damfool offer that reaches them by post. Any man, for instance, who has ever sent a dollar bill in answer to a patent medicine advertisment for 'Blushing Cured,' or 'Instant Cure for Deafness,' is an addressee. He has proclaimed himself a sucker, and he will never be let alone by the Inter-State

Mutual Help Mail Order League for the rest of his life. Amateur poets who answer the Boston firm's appeal are all potential addressees. All home-workers who take in magazines about cooking, interior decoration, and the Book of the Month are potential addressees. Farmers, musicians, and clergymen are generically regarded as suckers.

This explains why, enclosed in a single appeal to me in my capacity as Amateur Author ('Won't you subscribe to the *National Poetry Lovers' Magazine* at three dollars a year with a copy of *Power and Thought*, a two-dollar book, free? Thank you!'), there came also advertisements for *Certain Cures for Anæmia*, 1,000 *Cookery Receipts free, after complying with our one trifling condition*, *Selling Music in America*, *The Fundamentalist Controversy Explained in Simple Language*, and a variety of other literature, including *The Farmer's Automobile* (an ornamental booklet containing also the various regulations for headlights of cars in every State of the Union).

But there was one advertisement which appealed to me more than all these:

'The Original Cost was $45.00. You Get ALL FREE. Given FREE with a New or Renewal Subscription to "——." *The Secrets and original price paid follows:*

'Strongest man cannot lift you, secret $1. To sober up instantly, 50c. Removing tattoo marks, $1. Tearing telephone book in two—giant strength, $1. Have a grip of steel, $1. Calling heads or tails every time, 50c. How to sell $2 books by mail and make 75c. on each sale. Magic rubbing cloth for all aches and pains, secret, $1. How one trapper made $2,500 to $5,000 a year trapping wild animals, his secret, $2. Dandruff remedy, $1.

Pyorrhea remedy, $1. Soldering Fluid, no irons or heat, just apply, secret, $1. Dry carpet cleaner, secret, $1. Artificial skin, secret, $1. Melting glass without fire, $1. Repairing old electric bulbs, $1.

'Colouring Kodak prints, easy quick way, $1. Make $30 weekly with your typewriter, $1. Hypnotising animals, birds, bugs, $2. Catch hundreds of fish with this secret, $1. Rid any place of rats, etc., in a few minutes, secret, $2. Simple treatment for catarrh, varicose veins, gall stones, headache, all four treatments, $2. How buried fakirs live in air-tight, part water-filled coffins for over an hour, $1. Magic cure for monkey-bites, secret, $2. Banished in three weeks severe case of pimples and blackheads of three years' standing, secret, $2. You can shake the tallest towers on earth, secret, $1. Placing two unbroken eggs in ordinary bottle, secret, $2. Five sure ways of getting work, 50c. Lighting cigar on cake of ice, $1.

'Sure death for flies, $1. Fry eggs on cake of ice, $1. Coal substitute, secret, $2. Take any razor or blade, chop wood with it, few strokes on your strop with this and it will cut hair instantly, secret, One Dollar.

'Any One Secret Is Worth More than Cost of Magazine. "——" gives it ALL FREE to anybody sending just One New or Renewal Subscription at regular price of One Dollar.'

August 24th

A FAMILIAR COLLOQUY

MYSELF. . . . When, as a matter of fact, then, did you last go to church?

HIMSELF. If you except subsequent weddings, church-parades, and so on, it was on Good Friday, 1916.

MYSELF. How do you remember the date so precisely?

HIMSELF. How should I not?

MYSELF. This promises to be an anecdote. Let me hear it. I collect anthropologically interesting anecdotes of the first seduction and of the last voluntary act of public worship, and of the way mothers teach their sons the facts of life, and the way fathers teach them the ways of the world?

HIMSELF. Well, it isn't much really, but it's true. This is how I can fix the date. You see, I was on leave from France at the time, and I remember that it was just before the Easter Rebellion in Dublin, of which I heard the news in the hospital where I went for an operation the day after this happened. I remember particularly that it was Good Friday because there were no surplices worn in the church and the psalms were read, not sung.

MYSELF. You went to please your parents?

HIMSELF. Yes, they wanted me to come to the early morning service at first, and even tried to bully me there, but I was owed thirteen months' sleep; and though my father came hobbling along to my bedroom door at half-past six, banging loudly and informing me that my mother was counting on my coming with her on this day of all days, I did not turn out.

MYSELF. What excuse did you offer?

HIMSELF. A bad toothache; and it wasn't an excuse either. It was a really bad one.

MYSELF. So then they had a grievance at breakfast, and you knew that having won the first trick you would lose

the second and be forced to accompany them to the morning service?

HIMSELF. Have you parents, too? Yes, I knew that nothing would save me. . . . My father did all the talking, as the spiritual head of the family.

MYSELF. I forgot to ask, why was your poor father hobbling?

HIMSELF. Inglorious gout.

MYSELF. Were your parents always so anxious to force you to church? Or was it the War?

HIMSELF. At first I thought that it was no more than that. I smelt no rat, beyond a suspicion that they wanted to show me off in church in my battle-stained officer's uniform. But let me tell the story my own way. First, as you guessed, there were arguments at the breakfast-table in the course of which my toothache got the better of me and I said things that angered my father and grieved my mother. But at last, solely on her account (for she took no active part in the argument, merely looking sad and only officially siding with my father), I consented to come with them. At nine o'clock they went upstairs to dress. The service was to be at half-past.

MYSELF. Unusually early for a morning service!

HIMSELF. So I thought; but put it down to the new spirit that the nation was learning in war-time, of getting over with things quickly. And then a ring came at the door. It was the proprietor of a neighbouring bath-chair firm with a bath-chair. He explained that, as he had told my mother, he could not spare a man to take it to church, being under-staffed because of the War—his only help

was on a job pulling the Countess of I-forget-what to the Parish Church a mile or so in the opposite direction. For the moment I thought that it had been a very generous thought of my mother's on my account, but ill as I was feeling I could surely manage to get to the church, about half-a-mile away, without such a parade of infirmity.

MYSELF. Forgetting your father's gout?

HIMSELF. Forgetting it entirely; and also forgetting that passage in Herodotus about the two dutiful sons who yoked themselves to an ox-cart to pull their mother, the priestess, to the Temple. They were oddly used by Solon, in a conversation with King Crœsus, as a symbol of ultimate human happiness.

MYSELF. And what did you do when you realised that——

HIMSELF. I could find nothing to say—I think I laughed. Then down came my mother with her prayer-book, veil and deep religious look, and I could not spoil the day for her—she was very fond of me and I of her. So I took hold of the beastly vehicle without a word, my father appeared in a top-hat and his better carpet-slippers, and hoisted himself in; and we set off. It wanted oiling badly and one tyre kept coming unstuck, and winding itself around the axle. There was an appreciable slope down towards the church, and so the going, though heavy, was easier than the returning. . . .

MYSELF. And what of the service?

HIMSELF. At half-past ten or so it did not seem to be getting on as fast as it should have been, and I was dreadfully bored and, besides, longing to sneak outside for—

well, anyhow, I wanted to sneak outside. I whispered to my mother, 'Isn't it nearly over?' She answered, 'My dear, didn't your father tell you it was a three-hour service? And of course, since you couldn't get up to pull him to church for the early service, he'll want to stay to Holy Communion at the end. That will make it a little longer.' So I stayed and tried to compose Latin epigrams, which was, in those days, my way of killing time — on ceremonial parades, for instance, or in the dentist's chair, or at night in the trenches when things were quiet. I composed a maledictory one about the strapping young curate — besides myself, my father, the verger, and an old, old man with a palsied hand sitting just in front of me, the only man in the congregation, though there were sixty or seventy women present. I tried to remember whether the *i* of *clericus* was long or short, and couldn't; but it did not matter because I could make alternative versions to suit either case:

O si bracchipotens qui fulminat ore clericus . . .

and

O si bracchipotens clericus qui fulminat ore . . .

For he was now preaching a sermon about Divine Sacrifice, and bellowing about the Glurious Perfurmances of our Surns and Brethren in Frurnce to-day. I decided to ask him afterwards why, if he felt like that, he wasn't himself either in Frurnce or khurki.

MYSELF. And did you communicate?

HIMSELF. To please my mother, though to be sure I was not in the required mood of spiritual resignation. There is no more to the story except the being introduced at the church-door to new family-friends ('your father

has showed us your very interesting letters from the trenches. Tell me, etc., etc.'), and the dreary up-hill push back, my mother helping me, my father holding her prayer-book, myself sweating like a bull.

August 24th

This is a story that could never have been told against a Scot, and I don't know why, for complaints were as bitter against the favouritism of Scots by the first Stuart as they seem to have been against the favouritism of the Welsh by the first Tudor. I suppose the fact is that the Scot, for all his devotion to Glenlivet, would never have made up his mind to forgo his wee bittock bannock. The story comes from *The Merry Tales of Skelton*, printed ninety years ago by Dyce, otherwise not printed for nearly four hundred years:

Skelton, when he was in London, went to the King's Court [Henry VII], where there did come to him a Welshman saying . . . 'Sir, it is so, that many doth come up of my country to the King's Court and some doth get of the King by patent a castle, and some a park, and some a forest, and some one fee, and some another, and they do live like honest men. And I should live as honestly as the best if I might have a patent for good drink. Wherefore I do pray you to write a few words for me in a little bill to give the same to the King's hands, and I will give you well for your labour.'

'I am contented,' said Skelton.

'Sit down, then,' said the Welshman, 'and write.'

'What shall I write?' said Skelton.

The Welshman said, 'Write, *drink*.'

'Now,' said the Welshman, 'write *more drink*.'

'What now?' said Skelton.
'Write now, *a great deal of drink*; and now,' said the Welshman, 'put to all this drink a little crumb of bread and a great deal of drink to it, and read once again.'
Skelton did read, '*Drink, more drink, and a great deal of drink, and a little crumb of bread and a great deal of drink to it.*'
Then the Welshman said, 'Put out the little crumb of bread!'

Of the Englishman, the Irishman, the Scot and the Welshman, the last is the only really sympathetic character. The Irishman's genius is to be charming, but somehow to lack bottom; the Englishman's is to be profound, but somehow to remain superficially repellent. The Welshman, more particularly the South Welshman, has no such horizontal variations. His talents are moderate, his heart warm, his manner unexceptionable; he cannot sing out of tune; his humour is the only pure humour in these islands; and his integrity is such that even his lies, which are neither oratorical like the Irishman's, nor formally official like the Englishman's, but pleasantly conversational and all in the day's work, must be held at least philosophically true. Between him and the Scot—who lies awkwardly and seldom—the gulf is widest.
The Welshman is never afraid of looking ridiculous, for his consistency turns any joke against him into a joke against the universe in general. The Scot is in a constant terror of looking ridiculous, and thus he often contrives to make himself look ridiculous. But what is wrong with the Scot? He thinks that what is wrong is that he has been conquered by the English—as the Irishman will

offer the same lame excuse for his innate lack of seriousness. But the Welshman was once conquered too, and who hears him complain that his nerve or his spirit were broken by the experience? The Welshman knows that the English, having conquered in haste and ill-temper, repent at leisure, apologise sincerely and invite their victims to take their revenge. And he remembers having cheerfully taken such revenge, in the persons of the Tudors, making a more certain conquest of the English than Edward ever made of the Welsh. The Scot, of course, had the same revenge offered, but took it awkwardly in the persons of the Stuarts; and it is not unsignificant that the English had to call in a hero of Welsh blood and self-possession to rid them of that temperamental dynasty.

What, then, is really wrong with the Scot? Well, though he does not vary horizontally (being the same at the first meeting as he is at the last and always a faithful if frustrated lover of the truth) he varies in a more unfortunate way even than that—he varies vertically. He has two persons in him, and they are entirely unreconcilable, and he never knows which ought to be allowed to control the situation. Jekyll and Hyde are the confessions of a Scot, and recognisable Scottish characters, but Stevenson has not, I think, differentiated between them with proper candour. Dr. Jekyll should have been more of a James Barrie type—all syrup, kail and comfits; and Hyde should have been fellow-clansman to Sawny Bean of the Galloway sea-cave—all blood, gristle and pickle. For the true tragedy of Scotland is not Flodden or Culloden or any other stricken field where the blude rinned routh an' red; it is what happens when the Scot opens his mouth

to cry 'fee, fie, fo, fum,' baring his teeth to the gums like the ogre Sawny, and out, alas, there pops the Little Minister violet cachou that, all unsuspected, he has been religiously sucking as a breath sweetener. The Scots are an extreme people, whose extremes, however, always take to their heels at sight of each other.

James Douglas, a typical Scot, wrote recently in the *Sunday Express:* 'If it were possible for any man to read my secret thoughts, I would run away into perpetual hiding.' And that reminded me of what I heard a Welsh miner say once, when pressed for an opinion which he had no intention of giving, 'If it were possible for any man to read my secret thoughts, he would be a *plutty clever fellow, and welcome too!*' That is the difference between Scot and Welshman.

August 26th

The problem of publicity. Though it is no secret that the vulgarities of the publishing trade often make even the most experienced writer sweat with shame, it is also no secret that he lives by selling his books to a public that can have only a meagre foreknowledge of their contents, and that has to be persuaded somehow to put its money down on trust. That a book is published at all (unless the writer goes to the trouble of printing a limited edition and circulating it himself) means that the ordinary publishing system is accepted, however reluctantly, as a convenience for disposing of that book. But the publishing system is tied to the general advertising system, which is the highly technical exploitation of mass-gullibility by graded degrees of hoax. So it is a nice point whether it is more moral for a writer to sit back and let his publishers do their

best and worst, pretending not to notice their activities, or honestly to write his own blurbs and control the publicity campaign himself, doing what he can to keep it within decent limits.

A publicity campaign means trying to persuade the public that, though it is buying a pig in a poke, the pig has at least been taken out and weighed in reputable scales by so-and-so and so-and-so, and that previous pigs from the same poke and weighed in the same scales have always given satisfaction as bacon and sausages. The real shame of publicity to the writer of proper sensibility is this reference to the verdicts of so-and-so and so-and-so, for whose scales of judgment he has usually not the faintest respect. I can imagine no greater humiliation than to find one's second edition advertised on the dust-cover with the opinion of a so-and-so, 'here is greatness akin to that of Ibsen and Dostoevsky,' and of a second so-and-so, 'with this work the author boldly takes his stand at the head of contemporary thinkers.'

If these methods are humiliating to the writer it is likely that they are annoying to the average reader who, if he exists, is probably far less of a vulgarian than the advertising trade believes. Probably the best way to advertise a book, in England at least, is to announce it very modestly, to the point indeed of understatement. The overstatements, if the book is any good, will in due course be made in the reviews — no fault of the author or publisher — where they will be read in their proper contexts.

The reviewers, that is to say, are more and more harnessed these days to what is called 'the new journalism,' which is the making of everything possible into 'news,'

so that any extravagant discovery of new work, 'here is greatness akin, etc.,' is readily understood merely as an attempt to give a conventional large-print news-value to a book which the reviewer believes after a hasty glance to be worth reading (if he had the time) or even buying (if he had not been given it free). So let the Sunday journalists do their best for the book in their own way by overstatement, but let the publisher also — there are at least three very intelligent publishers in London — do his best by proportionate understatement; I do not mean, naturally, that he should understate the amount of copies sold, but merely be reticent about its literary qualities.

Even so the pig-in-the-poke problem remains, and will always remain; and it may indeed be argued jesuitically that confidence in the qualities of the book justifies any crooked means of inducing the public to read it — even to a put-up libel action, an arranged banning of the book by a public library, or the self-sacrificing suicide of the author. Perhaps the best that can be done is to allow the buyer as clear a sight of the pig, through the poke-mouth, as advertising expenses permit — to advertise the book, for instance, by printing in a single paper a specimen column-length of its contents rather than by printing a few inches of scrappy opinions of the book by so-and-so, so-and-so and so-and-so in three or four papers. What really sells a book is its discovery by unorganised enthusiastic readers, not professionally connected with the book-trade, who urge their friends to buy it and pride themselves on having made the discovery all by themselves. The professional critics, with few exceptions — such as the discreet and anonymous team of the *Times*

Literary Supplement and Arnold Bennett who contrives to conceal his professional interest in books by writing as an enthusiastic reader—which he may well be, being clearly under no pressing financial obligation to write his weekly column in the *Evening Standard*—have not nearly so much influence on book-buying as they are believed to have. The publication of a specimen column-length of a book in this way would give enthusiastic readers a clear chance of 'discovering' the book without having to rely on the always too short quotations from it that catch their eye here and there in the reviews.
Granted, there are many books that I have bought in my time (on the author-title-publisher principle) which I would not have wasted money on had I seen a specimen page or pages beforehand. On the other hand I must have missed a good many that I would have seriously considered buying had I not been prejudiced against them by the praises of notorious dud-reviewers advertised on their behalf.

August 27th

The feminine word-ending *-ess*.
English was once the sort of language in which a noun might capriciously decide to be masculine, feminine or neuter. One sort of war weapon or drinking vessel might take the feminine gender, another the masculine, a third the neuter, yet nobody could have guessed which was boy, which was girl, or which neither. Gender was dropped as a general system some time after the Norman Conquest, and little trace of it remained. Instead there was a sex-variation in all nouns expressing what grammar-

books call 'agency'; so the mediæval English spoke of 'treacheress,' 'servantess,' 'neighbouress,' 'danceress,' even 'charmeress' and 'friendess.'

This was grammatical and without prejudice. The point to be observed is that we now say 'teacher,' 'servant,' 'neighbour,' 'dancer,' whether a man or woman is concerned, and that the gradual extension of this usage to other nouns tends to throw a great deal of suspicion on words where the distinction of word-ending remains. Of course, some -ess words will always remain beyond suspicion: 'prophet' and 'prophetess,' 'giant' and 'giantess,' 'host' and 'hostess,' 'god' and 'goddess' (though 'goddess' has an objectionable use in metaphor) are evenly matched pairs. But such pairs are few.

If a general rule must be laid down it is this: that wherever a noun is to be used to denote an occupation (say for example that of writing), and there is an available form, 'writer,' which has not varied with the sex since mediæval times, then a word that does vary like 'author, authoress' should be avoided, or else the form 'author' used interchangeably for man and woman. For 'authoress' will have a ring of male prejudice in it.

This rule might be extended to words denoting race. 'Jewess' for instance is prejudiced. 'Jewess' means lascivious, blowzy, soft-spoken, sly, heavily perfumed. Women who happen to be Jews should be referred to simply as Jews unless they happen by a peculiar and unlikely chance to be Jewesses, like Keats':

> '. . . Curled Jewesses with ankles neat
> Who as they walk abroad make tinklings with their feet.'

'Negress' is prejudiced. It hides a false gallantry, as of someone saying behind his hand 'She is black as my hat, strong as a horse, and ugly as sin, but do not let us forget that she is a *Woman*.'

If I were a woman and a negro, I should insist on being called a 'negro,' not a 'negress.'

'Shepherd' and 'shepherdess.' If I were a woman and a shepherd I should not permit myself, for business reasons, to be described as a 'shepherdess.' Market-days would be impossible.

'Murder' and 'murderess.' A 'murderer' is usually an angry or brutal person, but 'murderess' has treachery and immorality in it too. Clytemnestra who, for adulterous reasons, killed her husband in a bath after his return from the wars, was a typical 'murderess'; Miss Frankie of American folk-song, who shot her Johnny, for his adultery, in a crowded saloon, and with a forty-five gun, was as plainly a 'murderer.' 'Murderess' is a term to be abolished in the interests of justice. And 'adulteress' is another: now that liability for divorce proceedings is evened up between husband and wife, it must give way to the interchangeable form 'adulterer.'

'Actress' is an unusual case. It is a word of less prejudice than actor; because acting is a somewhat despised profession for men and an honoured one for women. The social proof is to compare the number of peers or their sons who marry actresses with the number of peeresses or their daughters who marry actors. Still, if I were a woman and an actor I should prefer on the whole to be called an actor, not an actress.

'Poet' and 'poetess.' Of all feminine forms 'poetess' is the one I dislike most. It is used almost invariably in a

quarter-gallant, three-quarter-contemptuous sense to denote a woman who longingly aspires to rival man in his most sublime and peculiar province. Of course many women do accept the word with all its connotations of assured failure. Felicia Hemans was a 'poetess,' as Sappho and others have been 'poets.' But on the other hand there are men who write poetry of a dull male quality that corresponds with the insipid female quality of the work of poetesses, but there is no male word of offence to correspond. Let us make one and say that if Felicia Hemans was a poetess, then Southey, Rogers, Leigh Hunt and Company were 'buck-poets.' But poetry should not be an affair of sex any more than, for example, surgery. One says 'Mary Smith is a surgeon,' not 'Mary Smith is a surgeoness,' or even 'Mary Smith is a woman surgeon.' Sex has no place in the operating-theatre. Poetry is a sort of operating-theatre.

August 28th

Charity appeals that come by post I always destroy. They are always too well written, too cunningly pathetic, too heavily ornamented with lists of titled patrons to do anything but repel my sympathies. Anyhow, I don't believe in charitable institutions supported by voluntary subscriptions. They should be financed by the State. I know nothing more undignified in a rich country like this than that the big hospitals should have to send out their students in fancy dress collecting money in the streets, and organise bazaars and benefit matinées and ballots. One ought to give money out of one's private purse to private people who need it from time to time, but be regularly taxed for public service—hospitals, orphanages,

institutions for the blind, and so on—which should not be regarded as charities. I never give to nuns, except in Catholic countries, because to beg when wearing the habit is a form of bullying. I never give anything to anyone who tries to bully me into charity by singing hymns, playing the barrel-organ, cornet, harmonium, fiddle, bagpipes or gramophone, showing certificates of good character, exhibiting scars, handing me printed cards of poetry, asking for railway fares to Manchester, or by any similar means. But if, when I am in the country, a man comes to my door and says that he's on the road and would like a cup of tea and can refrain from pitching a hard-luck tale, or by wasting my time in any other way he'll get his cup of tea and his bread and cheese and a few coppers and an old shirt if there's one put by for him. And he'll call again in six months' time when he's working that part of the country again.

Beggars in London are another problem. I sometimes give money to a pavement artist if he can refrain from annotating his drawings with irrelevant remarks about the number of his children or the years he spent in the navy or his wounds while fighting for king and country, and if his drawings have that good-bad quality which excuses his calling himself an artist and yet accounts for his remaining on the pavement. I like the old-fashioned themes—fish on dish, cat on mat, house on fire, and Noah's Ark with dove returning. I never, as I say, give money to ordinary street musicians—there is far less excuse for bad music in the street than for bad music in the concert-room; but I have a tenderness for one-man bands, players of the Welsh triple harp, and men who perform with French chalk on the rims of wine-glasses.

They are sufficiently uncommon not to be public nuisances, and I like ingenuity. That is why I always give money to the man who folds and cuts paper into unexpected shapes, and to the lightning make-up artist. I give money to little girls who dance when their fathers whistle a tune to them. I give money to little boys who turn cartwheels, a thing I could never do myself as a boy. On flag and flower days I do not buy flags or flowers. I never give money to blind beggars; yet blindness is so heavily endowed in this country that a blind man who stands at a crowded corner and makes an additional pound or two a day in coppers is a mere financier. And he seldom has the good feeling to conceal his painful loss with a shade. Moreover, many blind beggars are not blind at all, even though, or especially when, they read the Bible aloud, in Braille. I never give money to Punch-and-Judy shows; I give to other marionettes, but I dislike Punch personally as a bullying hump-backed dago making capital out of his deformity. I never give money to contortionists. I always give money to old women who sell groundsel, because one must be in a very low state indeed to sell groundsel. I always 'remember the Old Guy,' but no more than once every Fifth of November; I always send the waits away penniless, unless it happens to be snowing or the carol is sung in Latin. I always give money to beggar-women with babies, because babies are very troublesome things to carry, even if they are borrowed.

August 29th

Here's someone who has mistaken me for a whole number of wrong people:

'Dear Sir,

In a book of criticism of yours, *Contemporary Techniques of Poetry*, I have found a Tennysonian ode of mine quoted unfavourably. This grieved me somewhat because I am an old friend of your family. Your aunt Mrs. Pritchard, whom I attended in her last illness, was particularly fond of that particular poem, and memorised it with many others of mine. I may add that I was surprised at your quotation of the poem, which, on re-reading, I am still quite pleased with, because if I am not much mistaken you were the judge in a competition in the *Contemporary Review* in which I won the first prize for a Lyric. But I lay the flattering unction to my soul that you wrote the whole book—in which you profess to admire the work of E. E. Cummings, Gertrude Stein and others—with your tongue in your cheek. I believe that you are really, like myself, a confirmed lover of poetry. I am wintering in Egypt, and understand that you will be there as Professor of Literature at Cairo University and I sincerely hope that we may meet and talk things over.

Yours very sincerely.

* * *

PS.—I may add that the poem occurs in a volume which won the commendation when it first appeared of the Poet Laureate and the late Viscount Morley.

August 30th

Things get made. Millions of different things get made every day, by millions of workmen all over the world, doing their six or eight or ten hours a day. Things get distributed. This is not a casual process, but one on the

whole extraordinarily well-calculated. It is possible to decide on any given day exactly how many English and exactly how many foreign white china egg-cups have been sold throughout the country in the previous twenty-four hours, and what proportion of these millions was accounted for by each large distributing centre. But there statistics end. The rest is casualness and guesswork. The terrific machinery of industry and trade has accurately taken the egg-cup from the pot-bank to the consumer's breakfast-table (or at least to the retailer's door) and is no further interested. Things are made; things are consumed.

The yearly consumption of white china egg-cups per head of the population of the United Kingdom is, I am informed, 52.4. I will not confuse the issue with a comparison of distributing-centre averages, commenting that Leeds leads with 97.3 yearly egg-cups per head and that Winchester is lowest with only 22.5. Let me ask you to look at the general average of 52.4. It is a ridiculous figure. The most careless or capricious person in the world does not, one would say, need a new white china egg-cup once a week throughout his life. Yet population, as opposed to its most careless or capricious members, apparently does. What is the sole comment of statistics? 'The consumption of next year is expected to increase by 2.4 per cent. per head.'

Where are last week's fifty-million-odd egg-cups, to replace which fifty million more are being consumed this week? Look in the dustbins. Look in the first fifty dustbins in your street, representing, say, one hundred and fifty consumers of egg-cups. Search them methodically on weekly dust-collecting days and see whether you will

be able to count one hundred and fifty discarded or broken egg-cups. You will not. You will find at the most twenty or thirty. Where are the rest? They have been consumed, but not, it seems, broken. You remind me of the breakages between wholesale and retail stores and between retail stores and the kitchen. I grant you twenty in every gross. But even so, every house in that street, on the evidence of the dustbins and of statistics, should have at least a hundred egg-cups in commission at the end of every trade year. Is this so? Certainly not. Ask any householder a year hence how many she has. And she will answer 'About a dozen.'

Now you talk about restaurants. 'That's where the principal wastage is,' you say. But if the principal wastage were at restaurants (to account for this otherwise unaccountable yearly wastage of 250,000,000 egg-cups), one would expect every time one entered a Lyons or an A B C tea-shop to hear a continuous crash of china and find the floor knee-deep in broken egg-cups. But one doesn't.

No. Things are made: things are consumed.

August 31st

Clarke saw my Loos trench-map which I was arranging to be photographed for my autobiography. He said: 'Festubert. I was there with the 17th Middlesex in December 1915. One evening I went out with the rum to the garrison of an "Island." The sergeant was in a great state of excitement, said he saw Fritz. I fired a Verey light into the wire. Two Germans stood up and held up their hands. They had a long sack with them. I expected it to be full of bombs or something. But it wasn't. It was full of . . . full of. . . . Sorry. I can't

go on. . . . I feel ill. . . . Sorry! I thought I could talk about the War, but I find I can't.'

September 1st

A review of *Poems*, 1929, in the *Sunday Times*, by Dilys Powell, quoting the line:

With the grave's narrowness, though not its peace

nonsensically as:

With the grave's quietness, though not its peace,

and continuing—'But where,' one sadly asks, 'is that perfect fusion of mind and sense which enchants us in "great" poetry?'

H. J. Massingham made a similar complaint once in the *Nation* after misquoting:

The utmost ends of human thought,
Till nothing's left to think.

as: *Till rotting, left to stink.*

September 2nd

Reading Emerson late at night. It is a long time since I read any old-fashioned poet in bulk: except Spenser about three weeks ago. Spenser was a lunatic poet; no co-ordination, appearance of great earnestness, a grudge, long dullness, flashes of nearly-good, a remote scene and archaic vocabulary which three hundred years have made still more remote. Remote lunatic material ritualised in a verse-form as hypnotic as the Spenserian stanza can be very compelling. Emerson wrote like a sane man trying politely but with little success to be a lunatic. He was not remote; he was really earnest; he had no grudge. His undisguisable sanity can be very compelling. He and Spenser cancel out.

September 3rd

A human document found in a second-hand book. Apparently by a rising young journalist to the father of the girl to whom he was engaged. The names changed.

September 6th, 1924.

Dear Sir Henry,

Diana tells me you will be back in London at the start of next month, so perhaps it would be a good thing if I wrote and told you just how things have developed between her and me since you went to Scotland.

First of all, your unspoken prophecy that I should be — how shall I say — run off my legs, has proved very nearly true. I just like her now very much indeed, but the original spark has so to speak fizzled perhaps through excessive pruning. It's a horrible thing to say. But if I had seen less of her and she had been more distant, things would perhaps have been different. I am sure it is very largely my fault, so much so that I have asked the Chairman of the Central Newspapers Limited — the people I am with — to send me abroad for at least six months at the first opportunity. He said rather doubtfully that he would, but that I was a young fool as I was doing so very well and so forth, and that he and Lord Newspaper were delighted with my work, and other frothy nonsense to the same effect. Indeed the absurd letter I had from Lord Newspaper thanking me over that matter of your second butler all rather goes to show that he is somewhat pleased that one of his employees has, to say the least of it, dined at your House. Which being so he will take excellent care to prevent me as far as possible

from creating any possible break. Which, of course, is foolish of him, as a separation from Diana, of whom I am desperately fond if no longer in love with, might easily from his point of view do the Trick.

As you may know, though please do not hint for a second that I told you, I asked Diana both orally and by letter to break off the engagement. That, however, has not helped things at all. That then is the position; and meantime please believe that I am doing my best to leave the country for a period of six months, or more—short of wrecking my career which after all is not unpromising and somewhat important to myself—and thus altogether clear the air of a situation into which I blundered so clumsily. I am quite satisfied that Diana will forget me in a very short time if she has half a chance, though of course she would be the last to deny it.

Yours sincerely,

* * *

I return to London the day after to-morrow.

A further document. The same letter, apparently re-written by a mother, aunt, or grandmother:

September 7th, 1924.

Dear Sir Henry,

Diana tells me you will be back in London at the start of next month, so perhaps it would be a good thing if I wrote and told you how things have developed between her and me since you went to Scotland. They have not improved. It's a horrible thing to say, but though I still like Diana very much indeed, I cannot re-capture the

original spark and, failing that, I dread to go on for both our sakes. She has everything to give that I could desire, and yet—it may be my fault, or these good things may have been offered me too generously; we may have seen too much of each other lately, and some absence from each other might bring back the warmth of feeling which I would give anything to feel again. I have in consequence approached the Chairman of the Central Newspapers Limited—the people I am with—to send me abroad for at least six months at the first opportunity. He said rather doubtfully that he would, but that I was a young fool, as I was doing very well and that he and Lord Newspaper were delighted with my work. Still I am doing my best to go, short of wrecking my career, so as to clear up a situation into which I have blundered so clumsily. You may know from Diana, but if not please do not hint that you know it from me only, that I have asked Diana both orally and by letter to break off the engagement, but that has not helped things at all. Still, if I leave her she may forget me sooner than she will allow it to be possible at present. I feel I should be doing her a graver wrong by marrying her without sufficient love than by grieving her now in going away while we are still free. In self-defence I must tell you that my strange want of feeling is not due to my caring for anyone else at present.

With deep regret,

Yours sincerely,

* * *

PS.—I have been spending a few days with my people, and am now on my way back to work.

[I congratulate Sir Henry and Diana on their escape.]

September 4th

Natural History notes:

When literary men, with certain combinations of letters after their names, reach a certain degree of restricted eminence, they tend to go to Jerusalem for a two-months' visit in the tourist season, returning with notes for a life of Christ, which they publish at twelve-and-sixpence in the following autumn. The publishers announce it as strikingly interpretative (though becomingly reverent) biography, based on a profound study of sacred literature and the geography of the Holy Land. Included in the book are the blue Judæan Hills, the pool of Siloam, the blind beggars in the market place, and the lilies of the field (once more explained as anemones): also an anachronistic cactus or two to supply the miraculous element. It does not sell very well, but it pays for the trip and is included in the twenty-guinea set of *Complete Works*. It is the last volume. The author is then awarded on his seventieth birthday, by subscription of his less eminent literary brothers, the indisputable green writing-desk, mentioned in a letter from Fitzgerald to Edward Malone, on which, say, Wordsworth, in his early Gad's Hill days, wrote the first fifty cantos of *Marmion*: he acknowledges the gift in a graceful circular. Then he dies, and is buried in a simple country graveyard, disappointed of the Abbey. Such successful literary men are accustomed to die in a house of Georgian period situated on the slopes of Hampstead. If they have begun as rebels of literature the house is gloomy and shuttered and smells and looks like a hyena den; if, however, they have begun as fine writers, it is supplied with clean lace-curtains and a holystoned

entrance-porch, and looks and smells like a museum. When their libraries are sold (rich in association copies) it is found that while the rarer books and manuscripts come from the hyena den, the more expensive books and those in better condition come from the museum. And what happens to the writing-desk, and to the bust of Shelley, and to the carved olive-wood trophies brought back from Jerusalem, and to the ivory and enamel paper-cutter, once the property of W. E. Henley, a gift to the deceased? What happens to them?

September 5th

I had a dream that I had written a popular song-hit called 'You surely won't charge me for that.' This is only one of dozens of winning ideas that attack me in my weaker moments of sleep or day-dream, and are only with difficulty repulsed. It is not long since a complete historical romance or interpretative biography occurred to me — 'The Emperor Pumpkin.' I had been reading Suetonius and Tacitus. It was about Claudius, the emperor who came between Caligula and Nero. The *dramatis personæ* were all ready. The only character who needed any serious enlargement was his physician and adviser Xerxes of Cos, in gratitude for whose services, it may be remembered, he gave the island its freedom from all Imperial imposts. Claudius has always been a puzzle to the historians, as indeed he was to his contemporaries. The Emperor Augustus was much surprised one day to hear his supposedly idiot grandson making a sensible speech. Claudius was to be presented in this story as an idealistic enemy of Cæsardom; his father Drusus had made no secret of his own republican views and it was

probably these that cost him his life. Claudius escaped both succession and assassination at the hands of claimants to the succession by a parade of his physical infirmities, an affected lowness of taste and a cultivated weak-mindedness. But in spite of every precaution the soldiers forcibly acclaimed him Cæsar after their murder of Caligula. He demurred, but they insisted. So he decided, the story would show, to do his best to bring Cæsardom into disrepute by playing the fool. Certainly he did issue numerous ridiculous edicts—such as that mentioned by Suetonius that no man should hesitate to break wind in his presence, if he felt so inclined, because to hold it might be injurious to health. And wrote ridiculous official letters like the one to the Alexandrians which has survived. And allowed his wife Messalina, whom he disliked, to cuckold him openly and make a laughing stock of him—until he decided (in my reading) to carry the farce further and to appear in the further ridiculous guise of the deceived jealous husband. He played the fool in the law-courts and in the circus. He allowed himself to be ruled (as it seemed) by millionaire eunuchs. But when the city stood for all this, and more, and he saw that his fun was wasted, he became bitter. He married as a second wife Agrippina, the worst woman he could find, gave her a free hand in affairs and chose, for his successor, Nero his step-son, whom he knew to be mad, egotistical and degenerate. He was persuaded that the sequence of Tiberius in his wicked old age, Caligula the monster, himself the idiot and then Nero would be enough to bring back the republic. It nearly was.

As for Britannicus, his son, whom he loved and therefore passed over for the succession and to whom he is reported

to have said, 'He that wounded thee will also heal thee,' according to the story I intended he was handed over to the care of Xerxes, who smuggled him out to Cos and found a changeling to take his place and be murdered, in due course, by Nero. I would have presented the death of Claudius not as murder by his wife with Xerxes as accomplice, but as suicide with Xerxes as accomplice. The satire of Seneca, *The Pumpkinification of Claudius*, circulated after his death, would be attributed to Claudius himself. I would have made it clear that Claudius did not play his hand as well as he might have done. He was too sincere a lover of his country to let his buffooneries prevent him from undertaking many valuable public works, and too moral a character to discredit the Imperial power by adding debauch to buffoonery.

I record all this here to lay the ghost of an idea which otherwise might continue to plead for execution.

September 6th

An uncomfortable situation. I suspected dishonesty in the employed person but I could not prove it to myself without measuring the level of the brandy in the flask, checking the petty cash, counting the cigarettes and the stamped envelopes. And to satisfy myself of dishonesty was not what I wanted; dishonesty discovered would mean a painful scene and a moral sequel and finding someone else to take the place of the employed person. This employed person was likeable, efficient and economical. I could not even satisfy myself of honesty by any single test. The suspected depredations were only occasional, if they happened at all, and a negative result after a day's or even a week's stocktaking would not

prove anything. So I purposely did not watch the level of the brandy and of the cigarettes in the big box — I even drank and smoked more than usual to give consumption a wide margin — and took no count of the petty-cash and stamps. But I heartily wished the situation at an end. The employed person thereupon suddenly ended it by self-dismissal, sending, by post, a week's wages in lieu of notice. That was suspiciously honest, yet the monetary value of the depredations could not have exceeded the amount of the week's wages. It remains an uncomfortable situation even though a more likeable, more efficient, more economical substitute was immediately found for the employed person.

September 7th

The following 'Reader's Query' appeared in *John o' London's Weekly:*

> 'Poem Wanted (6512) — Does any reader know a poem which describes life as a lump of clay which, with a bag of tools, man can fashion into a stumbling block or a stepping stone?'

It should have gone into my *Mrs. Fisher.* So should this letter to, I think, the *Daily Mirror* (it came wrapping something up):

> Sir,
>
> Your correspondent is right about the great scarcity of sixpences; has it occurred to him that this is due to sixpences being such useful coins that no one likes to part with them?
>
> M. L.
>
> Bournemouth.

September 8th

Trying to justify something that I wrote for an evening paper early this year (when I was living on a house-boat, a converted Thames barge moored at Hammersmith). Or to decide to discard it. Where does it go wrong? Where does it go right? Where does it go? Hardly even as far as the waste-paper basket. It must just stay here:

A sudden hoarse shouting woke me up. I looked out of the window at my bed-side. It was nearly full tide on the river and windless; a tug was neatly casting-off one of its train of barges at the wharf next door. A consignment of glass-ware in crates. The early morning greetings of tug-master and wharf-man were of their usual mock-abusive friendliness. After all this hubbub there followed half an hour of calm, in which I half-slept and half-watched a pair of dab-chicks bobbing about only a few yards from the window. The water was pink and grey in the dawn, the tow-path on the opposite bank was deserted and there was no river traffic. So the stage was well set for the five swans who floated up with the tide and swam about under my window for some time. They expected bread; they should have known that it was too early. I could distinguish the plebeian swans, with their nicked beaks, the property of the Vintners' and Dyers' Companies, from the royal swans with un-nicked beaks which owe immediate vassalage to the Crown. But I could only distinguish them by the nicks, not by their carriage. They went off sulkily after a while.

The next event was a brown-paper parcel that drifted by accompanied by a flock of about twenty gulls. They screamed and wheeled and dived and tore at it and

fluttered and squabbled and grew very excited. Though it went by slowly I could not make out what it contained. I was glad when it had gone, because I was still sleepy. The amount of things that drift by! Especially at high tides when there has been heavy rain two days previously up the Thames Valley. Baskets, cabbages, chairs, fruit, hats, vegetables, bottles, tins, heaps of rushes or straw, dead things. Not so many dead things now as in the summer. Far fewer dogs. That is because in the winter they don't go in so much after sticks and get carried away by the current or murderously held under water by the swans, who are very jealous of their river.

Twelve lemons have just gone past. Now there are several more. They look sound enough. An accident to a barrow? One learns to distinguish accidental flotsam from intended flotsam. That hat over there for instance was accidental, blown off at Westminster or Kew, by the look of it; the one that went by a few minutes ago was surely intended—a discard from Brentford or Rotherhithe?

The amount of drift-wood is extraordinary. I wonder that someone does not farm it for profit. Perhaps someone does. I do not count the old woman who walks along the narrow foreshore at low tide and puts a few pieces into a muddy sack; I mean someone who would collect it by the ton, dry it out in front of huge furnaces, and sell it in bundles for firewood. But perhaps the supply would give out sooner than I have supposed. A lot of the variety is repetitious. After all, certain pieces that I recognise when I see them again (for instance, that bit of *Diving Girl* apple-box) go up and down with the tide for a week or more before I lose sight of them.

Human corpses are rare. If one can catch a corpse and

pull it out, one is awarded seven shillings and sixpence. I wouldn't do it for that. And I suppose one would have to give evidence at the inquest into the bargain. No, I would leave the corpse for someone else to earn money on. There go the river police in their motor-launch. They are watching suspiciously in case I throw my apple-core out of the window. It is a prosecutable offence. I will wait until they have gone. Here comes the *Mary Blake*. I am getting to know the tugs well. I can distinguish the *Mary Blake*, the *Vixen* or the *Elsa* at half a mile. But every day something new of one sort or another goes by. One early morning last year was sensational. There went by an opera hat, a submarine and a seal. To-day I am content with the dab-chicks and the lemons. At low tide I expect the old woman with the sack and the old man who pokes about under the stones and puts what he finds into jam jars. He would puzzle you but I have been at this window long enough to find out what he is after. He is an anthology-poem by William Wordsworth, *The Leech Gatherer*. Plenty of leeches on this beach. The demand, I hear, is steady. Whether from extremely old-fashioned doctors or from extremely modern ones I do not know. Or care much at the moment. I am busy being pleased with the river which is now as still as a lake, at the exact balance of the tide. A child's ball is floating motionless under the window. I am tempted to get up and rescue it. But it looks as though it wouldn't bounce. I'll stay in bed a bit longer.

September 9th

The Centre of Culture and Progress at its usual Sunday concert-work in British Grove. Old-fashioned stuff.

One hears the top notes and the clapping. And the cornet solos. And now an immense new Talkie Cinema, The Commodore, on the other side of the house, trying out its immense organ with Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words*. When I was a child I suffered much emotionally from Mendelssohn and Schubert whom an elder sister used to play in the evenings when I was going to sleep upstairs. Such melodies are quasi-human. They want to say something precise and important but are bound within the octave and so cannot register anything either precise or important and get worked up about their own inarticulateness until that at least is articulate: the hearers who are also inarticulate, who cannot say or do or think anything precise, get worked up sympathetically and glorify music as the purest of the arts. Mendelssohn was terrible when I was a child; now he is just a bore, because I am articulate.

No legal action against these two musical nuisances would be effective. The organ went on until 3 a.m.

September 10th

Guessing Black or White. I forget who it was who once challenged me to this game. He said that he would guess right three times out of four whether I was going to say black or white. I saw that it was a question of deciding what degree I would reach of negativity, e.g. 'Not black because black the last time,' or 'black because not black because black the last time.' I defeated him by making no negative degrees, but invisibly to him tossing up a button in my pocket and choosing black or white according to which side up the button fell. He was furious when I told him how I had managed it.

September 11th

An oddity. On a stall at the Shepherd's Bush Market I saw offered for sale six cheap-looking china plates in a single lot, priced at 15s. They were inscribed as follows in Gothic characters: (1) Potherb, (2) Marc, (3) Colin Kendrick, (4) Mousetrap, (5) Stinker, (6) Dogsbody. What were they doing there and at that price? What did they mean? And why did the unknown purchaser, who carried them off two minutes after I had seen them, leave Mousetrap behind?

September 12th

It is a prosecutable offence, it is true, to walk about in a public place with small-pox, for small-pox is one of the notifiable diseases. Other notifiable diseases are leprosy, cholera, scarlet fever and bubonic plague. But many other diseases are, fortunately for public liberty, not notifiable. Influenza of the most virulent kind, a very harrow of a disease, a ninety-seven diseases in one, is not notifiable and therefore free to all. Even so spectacular a disease as whooping-cough is not notifiable either. If I were unlucky enough to catch whooping-cough, and when adults catch whooping-cough it is noisy, I could not be prevented from using my combined Tram, Omnibus and Tube season ticket for as long as it was available. That is a very comfortable consideration. Nor could I be prevented from whooping myself sick in church or cinema as often as I chose to visit these places, though an occasional usher might perhaps slide up, if I were sitting in a corner seat, and politely tap me on the arm in sympathy. The papers complain of the minor vexatious curtailments

of liberty which hang over from the War, the limitations of hours in which a man can drink himself silly or eat himself senseless on chocolate cream or tripe. They overlook the many glorious liberties that still remain for them. Here in London any citizen walking in the public streets is at liberty to dress exactly how he or she pleases, within easy limits of decency. No costume will be considered too voluptuous, no rags will be considered too ascetic. Any gait may be adopted from a hobble to a run; one may walk on one's hands or sit on a roller-skate and push oneself along with a stick. Any scent may be used in the most confined public apartment, and of any strength, from attar of roses and patchouli to assafoetida and fish-manure. No eccentric personal habit will be barred — neither snuffling, picking the teeth, scratching the head, fidgeting the feet, pulling the lips about, crumpling the ears, twiddling the thumbs or hitting the teeth with an indelible pencil. The most loathsome sores, rashes or amputations may be casually displayed. Soot, flour, sawdust or any other substance may be worn on the clothes and rubbed off against a neighbour. One is at perfect liberty to approach any stranger and ask in any language at one's command for the most remote information of either a public or private kind, so long as the request is politely made and cannot be characterised as pestering.

Great tolerance is given to members of the public who sing, whistle or shout, particularly if it is apparent to everyone that they are also reasonably drunk and therefore liable to continue all the louder if interfered with. A noise is not legally a disturbance unless its effect is to cause a crowd to collect, so that the traffic is interrupted. Interruption of traffic is regarded as an infringement of

the liberty of others, even though the crowd that collects enjoys the disturbance. This certainly is a little hard, but on the other hand if one makes part of the traffic oneself one is given every possible liberty in retarding it. There is nothing at all to prevent us driving hay-wagons drawn by decrepit oxen up and down the busiest and narrow City streets at any hour of the day we please and resisting every attempt on the part of faster vehicles behind us to slip past us. There is nothing, indeed, to prevent us, if we feel equal to the task, from getting between the shafts ourselves and going still slower. Monster processions with banners and bands can also be organised at any time protesting or demanding any foolish thing that occurs to us and holding back the traffic for hours. The pavement is as free as the road. We can walk eight or nine abreast as slowly as we like and prevent anyone from getting past except by way of the road; so long as we just keep moving we have perfect liberty.

And we can play Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words* on a huge organ until three o'clock (or longer) in the morning in a select residential neighbourhood. At two a.m. preferring a dramatic entrance I entered the Cinema by an emergency exit not yet provided with a door. I found myself in the Circle at the point where Boxes occur in ordinary theatres. I shouted down in a terrible voice to the organist to ask how long he proposed to go on playing and preventing the neighbourhood from sleeping. The night-shift of stage-hands gave him moral support. He replied 'all night.' I threatened legal action.

September 13th

To-day I am not a private citizen any longer. I am the

self-styled chairman of a non-existent committee of householders protecting the amenities of the Square. In that quality I have written a stiff letter to the Management of the Cinema threatening a civil injunction. I become a collective dragon in order to fight the Talkie Trust, another collective dragon. A third dragon has come to my assistance, a genuine committee from the other side of the Square with a real lawyer as the lungs and a London County Councillor as the sting in its tail. I fade out.

What makes the most horrible collective monster? Organised motherhood or organised clergy? Motherhood the most terrifying, clergy the most provocative. I remember David, when three years old, driven in a car through Oxford during an Anglican Conference. Flocks of clergymen with labels in their button-holes streaming over the road, blocking the pavement. David shouted excitedly: 'Kill them, kill them!'

September 14th

So I dreamed that I found three engraved stones. One was carved black lava in the shape of a diabolo though only half the usual size; I discarded this after a quick glance. One was a Polynesian totem-stone of irregular shape about the size of a footstool, with an interlace of red and black lines picked out in a hard wax. The third was a rough onyx, of the size and shape of a large potato, beautifully carved in mediæval Greek script in a hollow near the top: *Palin, authis, agan.* The words were in relief in the honey-coloured part of the onyx and were written backwards. I translated them in the dream as 'Again and again and again,' not realising the play on the

word *agan*. What they really mean is 'Again and again and *agan* (very much so),' with the sense of 'back again' in both the *palin* and *authis*. Back again and yet again and very much so!

September 15th

One of the best physical sensations I know is waking up dead-tired, with a clear mind, in sunlight, after a night of horror.

September 16th

The opening day of the Commodore. All the important people in the Talkie world attended and filled the square with their Rolls-Royces; the organ pealed out triumphantly. No reply has arrived to my letter or the round-robin. One can't force people to answer letters or even stop people writing them. But since the move has to-day (and for reasons entirely unconnected with the noise) definitely decided itself, what do I care? I am now no more bothered with Mendelssohn when I am working than I used to be with a bombardment when I was in the trenches and off duty. Oh, let his songs without words on the organ be heard all over London and shake the chimney pots and gable-ends into the street to the greatest good of the greatest number of people. And, with this mood, the room has suddenly lost its look of ancient permanence. It is not a room; it is premises and furniture. Two and a half years' residence is, in retrospect, two and a half years, not a lifetime as it seemed yesterday.

September 17th

Four circulars have come to me from Pullar's Dye Works,

Perth, forwarded to me from various addresses where I have been on different occasions during the last four years and from which I have sent clothes to Perth to be dyed or cleaned.

And four circulars from the Encyclopædia Britannica to me in various qualities—as a member of my public school (to R. von R. Graves), as a member of the University (to R. R. Graves), as a writer (to Robert Graves) and as an ordinary buyer of books from some bookshop or other (to R. Graves). One day everyone will have a government number instead of a name. But crafty or important people will succeed in getting several each, one for each of their different public activities; and there will always be confusion between such numbers as 45450, 54450, 45540, 54540. So more superfluous circulars than ever will be sent.

September 18th

This passage is from a well-informed book on the French Revolution:

> As for Raynal, it is Lamartine who is responsible for the statement that Marat was chiefly under his intellectual sway. Lamartine in this case as in others has allowed his poetic imagination to run away with his historical judgment. There is more cause to consider the influence of Beccaria. Though the great Italian criminologist received but scanty mention in the voluminous writings of Marat, the latter's *Plan de législation criminelle* resembles the former's *Traité des délits et des peines* to such an extent as to have led to the accusation of plagiarism by later writers—a charge

which was nevertheless not justified. But another and perhaps greater source of inspiration and knowledge for this work must certainly have been Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois*.

The best schooling for historical writers of this sort would be to make them write out their stuff as if it were to be cabled at a shilling a word, and then put back the and's and the's and other unimportant but comforting parts of speech. Thus:

LAMARTINE UNTRUSTWORTHY HISTORIAN WHEN RHETORICAL FIRST STATED MARATS WRITING OVER-INFLUENCED BY RAYNAL STOP LATER WRITERS UNJUSTIFIABLY ACCUSE MARAT PLAGIARISATION BECCARIA ITALIAN CRIMINOLOGIST HARDLY MENTIONED MARATS WORKS STOP PLAUSIBLE BECAUSE RESEMBLANCE MARATS PLAN LEGISLATION BECCARIAS TRAITE DELITS STOP ANYHOW PLAN OWES MOST MONTESQUIEUS ESPRIT LOIS.

Which would ease out again to:

It was Lamartine, an untrustworthy historian when he was writing rhetorically, who first said that Marat's work was over-influenced by Raynal. Later writers also accuse Marat of plagiarising Beccaria, the Italian criminologist, whom he hardly mentions in all his many writings. This is unjustified, though more plausible since there is a certain resemblance between Marat's *Plan de Législation criminelle* and Beccaria's

Traité des délits et des peines. In any case this book of Marat's owes more to Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois* than to any other work.

September 19th

Who wrote or did not write the following and in what circumstances or absence of circumstances?

Dear G——,

Thank you for your interesting critical suggestions which I shall certainly consider if there is a call for a popular edition of the volume to which you refer.

Yours very truly,

? ?

PS.—And may I not call you Father? As you are probably aware my wife is living with the man whose wife has been living with your son.

September 20th

INTERVIEW WITH A DEAD MAN

After awhile the dead man, recognising my voice, began to whistle and imitate the masters of his old school, many of whom, bicentenarians, survived him; 'though perhaps no longer, ahem, in the active pursuit of pedagogy,' he said, intoning in a mock-clerical voice.

'What's news?' I asked.

'News?' he said. 'Well, for a start here's a letter that came last night from my executors informing me that I am expected to write a posthumous international anthem for the League of Nations suitable for translation into at least twenty-seven languages.' He went on to say that he

had indeed already executed the commission; he had early that morning written a marching song of hope, with the rhythms heavily stressed for percussion purposes; he had poked it up through the letter-slit of the stout Welsh-quarried slate slabs which, inscribed 'HE BEING DEAD YET LIVETH,' formed the roof of his quasi-eternal resting place. He had then, however, recollected the closeness of the church, where the song would undoubtedly be sung on Christmas and Easter days, on Empire Day, the King's Birthday and all similar semi-religious, semi-political feasts; and had slowly drawn the composition back and torn it up before the sexton had caught the glint of it. 'It was an ironic production,' he said, 'but the living can never believe that the dead have any sense of humour, so whenever any reference was made to the song in my hearing or whenever it was sung or whistled I would be forced to chuckle audibly to disprove this popular fallacy.'

'I am beautifully embalmed,' he continued. 'They were obliged, of course, to remove my digestive and sexual organs, which are corruptible, but I still have my fingers free to pick my nose in the old absent fashion, to scratch my head when it itches and to use a pencil thoughtfully when the itch is so eased. This is a lidless coffin allowing me plenty of elbow-room. My eyes are shut with coins, but this is no handicap in the decent darkness of the vault; I always, even when alive, had the knack of writing with my eyes closed. I lay the left hand flat as a margin to the paper and pricking the skin with my pencil each time, know by sensory indication just where to begin the new line.'

So he rattled on, remarking among other things that at least he had no more financial worries now. He had

benefited handsomely under his own will and paid the lease of the vault and of a small plot of land around it for ninety-nine years in advance. Unfortunately the freehold, the property of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, was not for sale; he had, however, secured the option of renewal for the same term when the ninety-nine years should have expired. He asked for news of his wife and children and of their step-father.

In short, he was perfectly dead and his daily post-bag, because of the recency of his death, was enormous; he used the blank pages of letters and the backs of envelopes for his replies. He was in no position to buy stationery, even had his signature to cheques or letters been held valid, which it was not. He calculated, however, that the serviceability of his large gold propelling-pencil (which held, screwed in the base, a copious supply of lead-refils) could even at the present extravagant daily rate of use be protracted for fully another three hundred years. 'With care, for as long as three thousand years,' he cried, 'and by that time who will care for my work except antiquarians?'

His mood was now so hilarious that I had no compunction in leaving him without further words of commiseration or encouragement. His parting joke was one about the legal impossibility of the dead libelling the living. 'But,' he said, 'I am careful not to trade on my immunity. I flatter myself that I died a sportsman and lie buried as such.'

September 21st

Once, while trying to decide in what part of the Alps to take a holiday—Savoy, Switzerland, or the Tyrol—a

letter was forwarded to me by my father. It was written in an old man's hand, undated and signed with the initials W.W. The colour of the ink and paper, and the style of handwriting, suggested the 1840 period, but as the addressee was plainly Robert Graves, Esq., I naturally read it as a personal message rather than as an historical document. It began rather abruptly:

> Mr. Robert Graves will bear in mind what I said against the phrase of 'making a Tour in Switzerland' as generally understood to relate to Alpine Switzerland—the thing best to be done is to cross the Alps by as many passes as you conveniently can; descending into Italy and back again—to and fro.

My correspondent was William Wordsworth, I decided, and my guess was confirmed by finding the address, 'Rydal Mount,' at the bottom left-hand corner. He had a lot of advice to give me:

> Taking you up at Berne is, in some respects, inconvenient, as it leaves the Lakes of Zurich and Wallenstadt and the noble pass of the Via-Mala, and over the Splugen, and so down upon Chiavenna and the Lake of Como, etc., upon your left hand. But as you must start from Berne it would probably be best, as *we* did in 1820, to go to Thun—at Thun (if you have an hour to spare) is a pleasant walk in the grounds of ——

Here Wordsworth could not, for the life of him, recall the name, so he turned to his volume *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent* and looked it up. He remembered a poem he had written there called 'Memorial near the Outlet of the Lake of Thun.' But the poem gave him no help,

so he wrote 'near the outlet of the Lake,' and then scratched it out again crossly and gave it up.

> where there is a small Tablet to the memory of Aloys Reding. The views from the Ch:yd and Castle are also very interesting—up the Lake to Unterbeer and Interlacken. The Lake of Brientz—the Fall near it which we did not visit—are worth seeing if you have time.

What poetic gold had Wordsworth brought back from Brientz in 1820? He had seen certain 'harvest-damsels float, Homeward in their rugged boat. . . . The rustic maidens, every hand, Upon a Sister's shoulder laid.' He had heard them 'Chant as glides the boat along, A simple but a touching song; To chant, as Angels do above, The melodies of Peace in Love.'

> and over the Wengern Alp to Grindelwald and over the Schidec to Meyringham. Observe, on your descent, look for the celebrated falls of Reichenbach. Thence by the Lakes of Lungern and Sarnan on to Lucerne. From Lucerne to the top of the Riga.

He means the Righi. The Righi ascent he had celebrated in *Our Lady of the Snows:*

> 'Even for the Man who stops not here
> But down the irriguous valley hies,
> Thy very name, O Lady! flings,
> O'er blooming fields and gushing springs,
> A tender sense of shadowy fears
> And chastening sympathies.'

He must have been very proud of that second line.

Coleridge, by the way, held that a love of mountain scenery is only found among highly educated mountaineers (i.e., that it is a purely literary feeling): 'Where this is not the case, as among the peasantry of North Wales, the ancient mountains, with all their terrors and all their glories, are pictures to the blind and music to the deaf.' The letter continued with a bare itinerary: Switz, Brunnen, Fluellen, Altorf, Amstag, Urseren, the Lake of Como.

> Then take the boat for Porlezza, and over the hill to Menaggio — thence to Cannobbia, thence across the Lake to the promontory of Bellagio, and from the Alcove in the Duke's grounds you see parts of the three reaches of the Lake of Como — magnificent prospect — here if you find our names, pray refresh them —

It was at Cannobbia that Wordsworth had fallen in with the 'Italian itinerant' who was planning to come to England to hawk clay busts of Shakespeare and Milton round the countryside, and had penned the following tender lines:

> What stirring wonders wilt thou see
> In the proud Isle of Liberty!
> Yet will the Wanderer sometimes pine
> With thoughts which no delights can chase,
> Recall a Sister's last embrace,
> His mother's neck entwine.
> Nor shall forget the Maiden coy
> That *would* have loved the bright-haired boy.

All Wordsworthians know how Wordsworth 'therefore

wished him safe return, To Como's steeps—his happy bourne! In garden glade to prop the twig, That ill supports the luscious fig.'

The letter, which went on and on for a thousand words was enough to decide me against Switzerland. But it was put up for sale at Sotheby's and somebody paid quite a lot of money for it because it was by Wordsworth; so *that* was all right.

September 22nd

If I can be said to have a prose-style, I learned it at Wrexham when a young officer. Captain 'Shots' Jones taught me to compose field-messages to the formula of: 'Time, place, date—from whom, to whom—who, how, when, where, why—how despatched,' cutting out everything not pertinent to the message. If I can be said to have a poetic style, it is a style of still further elimination of what is not pertinent; the message reduced to 'who, how, why.'

September 23rd

Beauty competitions for women are won by eighteen-year-olds, with faces that combine the smoothness of eighteen with the vague inanity of eighty. Beauty competitions for children are won by eight-year-old girls who have precociously developed chins and noses and busts which give them an eighteenish look, and yet preserve the vague inanity of eight. All blondes, of course, out of respect for the angels.

September 24th

Someone said to me once that what was wanted to make

religion more practical and acceptable was an officially approved popular abridgement of the Bible. And what I should have suggested was the ending of the story in the first chapter:

> 'And it came to pass that God died and left them *a lot of money*. And the evening and the morning were the eighth day.'

I said half-asleep: 'It said in that *Saturday Evening Post* article, written by General Booth's daughter, that he was half-Jew and a fine showman, and that he had an Old Testament face.' And I added, 'Yes, he was like Isaiah with the She-bears or Jeremiah in the Bull-pit.' It was because I was half-asleep, when my mind always runs into a theatrical costumier's shop and comes back in fancy dress. So this morning I worked out why I had chosen that particular combination. These were the calculations:

Moses in the bulrushes,
Daniel in the lions' den,
Jonah in the whale's belly,
Nehemiah in the dungeon,
Joseph in the pit,

Together make *Jeremiah in the bull-pit*. The holy prophet delivered from oppression by God. (It is the stock situation of the Old Testament. If God were made to die only on the ninth day (in the abridged Bible) and something were needed for the eighth day, the story of Jeremiah in the bull-pit would do very well.)
Pit is both a commercial and religious symbol. Financially it means bulls and bears (appreciation and depreciation). In the religious sense the prophet is in the pit. If

he is a bear he is Jeremiah, if he is a bull he is Isaiah. In either case he is in the Pulpit. Booth was a prophet. He was also a financier. He was alternately bull and bear. Bears are baited in bear-pits, bulls in bull-yards, prophets everywhere. Booth was baited. The she-bears were Elisha's, which he loosed on the children when they baited him. So Isaiah with the she-bears, to balance Jeremiah in the bull-pit. And one can go further with the she-bears. I recently read a book by a woman who had been befriended by the Army and was not grateful. And more recently the Army, it is alleged, continuing Booth's showmanship tradition, staged a special rescue-wagon display of betrayed girls driven the most roundabout way possible through the streets of a city in the Midlands to a 'Home for Fallen Women.'

September 25th

A mystery at Court. A month or two ago I had a letter from H.R.H. the Prince of Wales' private secretary, asking me to write something original for *The Legion Book*, a charity anthology to which all the most amiable English writers were being invited to contribute, and which would be published by the King's Printers for the Christmas season. Before I had had time to write a loyal but firm reply, in fact the very next day, another letter came with the same ostrich plume (or I believe, in heraldry, more correctly, vulture-plume) crest, informing me that the project had been abandoned. 'Quick work,' I thought. 'Can it be that the Royal Society of Literature or the Authors' Society, or the Publishers' Association,

sent off an immediate deputation to His Royal Highness? pointing out that a Royal Gift Book of this sort, sure of a fifty-thousand-copy sale at Christmas, can only be published at the expense of authors and publishers generally?'

But to-day I read in the papers that the book is in an advanced stage of preparation, and is, after all, soon to appear. And I speculate with great curiosity as to just *what* it was that, let us say, the Lord Gold-Stick-in-Waiting whispered to His Royal Highness of my private life or character that made this reconsideration necessary. Of course, it may have been merely the quick realisation of a mistaken address, the letter being in fact meant for my uncle Charles Graves of *Punch*, or my brother Charles Graves of the *Daily Mail*, or my father, A. P. Graves, Litt.D. F.R.S.L. M.A. X. H.M.I. K.T.L. whom I saw aptly described the other day as 'that indefatigable dean of Irish letters,' or for Clotilde Graves, author of *The Dop Doctor*, or for Ralph Graves, the cinema star and miscellaneous writer, or for George Graves the comedian (or for Robert Nichols, Robert Bridges or Robert Trevelyan—the Roberts often get mixed too); and the evasion merely intended to spare my feelings.

Another possible explanation is that the most famous authors of all were lightning prompt, and came chasing to St. James's Palace with their manuscripts in their hands as soon as they received their invitations, and that their contributions were too amiably long, so that we smaller fry, away down the list, were immediately pushed out to prevent the book from selling at a loss.

And if this should meet the eye of any senior officer of the Royal Household . . .?

September 26th

A curious change of emphasis in modern taboo. Easy, direct reference to the sex-act is considered far less blameworthy than easy, direct reference to defecation. A novelist may send hero and heroine to bed together and even watch them awhile at their play before he switches the lights out with asterisks; but he cannot send either of them, though separately, to the water-closet. My publishers have stood for a lot of easy, direct sex-stuff in *Good-bye to All That*, quite rightly feeling safe about it; but they have decisively drawn the line at my very innocent Welsh story of Private 99 Davies, who was charged in the Orderly Room at Wrexham in August 1914 with an act 'prejudicial to order and good discipline — committing a nuisance on the Barrack Square.' I recorded the conflicting evidence gravely given by witnesses as to the justifiability of the commitment. If they print it, they say, it will put a lot of people off the book. Well, they know their business, so I have withdrawn it.

I suppose that the trouble is that sex seems a major and excretion only a minor human theme. Phallos is orgulous and often indeed claims to be the very King of Heaven, but the modest nymph Cloacina makes no pretensions to deity. The solitary instance in literature of her deification is Tyrrell's polished address to the nymph, written up in the jakes of Trinity College, Dublin, half-a-century ago. I only recall the first four lines:

> Fair Cloacina, goddess of this place,
> My suppliant attitude review with grace!
> Mild yet cohesive grant my dues to flow,
> Not roughly swift, nor impudently slow. . . .

A strong case could be made out for excretion as a more classical literary subject than sex; the very paucity of defecatory plots should commend it. 'Incomplete elimination,' as the advertisements remind us, 'is the most powerful and universal poison of modern civilisation — (what does your mirror tell you?)"; and, they might add, successful elimination is, with sound sleep, one of the only two unassailably innocent recreations left to man in this increasingly God-awful world. . . . Tell me (in whispers, if necessary), did you ever hear of an ascetic who deliberately cultivated constipation?

Any society formed for the freedom of the bowels and for freedom of speech about freedom of the bowels can count on my whole-hearted support. I remember a most impressive lecture once delivered to me in the gymnasium at Charterhouse by the boxing-instructor. He said, poking me in the plexus with a rigid fore-finger, and fixing me with a little hard eye like a snake's, 'Now listen, Mr. Graves, to what I'm telling you, and don't you go away and forget it neither. *Let nothing never stand between you and your daily duty!* Remember, "England Expects." And what's more, sir, if you 'ad witnessed one 'alf the 'orrible sights I 'ave witnessed at Army post-mortems in this country and in Ireland, in a man's interiors, you wouldn't 'esitate, not if the mood came on you, to stop and loosen your braces, walking down Piccadilly, no, that you wouldn't! They tells me you write poitry. Well, Mr. Graves, now there's a subjeck for you.' This harangue provoked me to the following couplet:

> *O cut on my grave let the epitaph be:*
> '*His bowels and manners were equally free.*'

September 27th

Abandoning myself to the triviality of this journal is rather like putting myself in God's hands and leaving it all to Him. Apparently after writing my autobiography for eighteen hours a day all this summer, I found it hard to stop dead when I unexpectedly noticed that it was finished; the discipline of making a purely quantitative entry every day satisfied the journalistic dæmon evoked by it.

There are now still three clear days before I leave England, when this habit will, I hope, automatically lapse, but I feel that I have quite exhausted my paragraphistic inventiveness. Very well, let God think these three entries out for Himself. I offer him every convenience.

God replied at once: 'I accept with pleasure the benefit of your autobiographical first person.'

To-night we discussed more fully the question of literary form. God, as usual with no sense of proportion, wanted me to write a miniature encyclopædia in three books, at the rate of a book a day, profusely annotated with references to standard theological and anthropological authorities. I had to spend a whole hour arguing with him about the inadvisability of such a serious tone: the trivial character of the previous entries would make it all read ironically. Much better to keep within the limits of my bantering sincerity. Our most bitter disagreement was on the question of etymology. He complained that the popular derivations of such titles of his as Juju and Diana, which I proposed to substitute for his more scholarly and cumbersome ones were, though true in spirit, not true in letter. I reminded him that he was an

evolutionary deity, and must expect to progress by simplifications of this sort; and moreover it was written that, whereas the spirit quickeneth, the letter killeth. He replied hesitatingly that he remembered having said so, but the letter has always more authority than the spirit; for fewer readers are quick than dead and the most dead of all, those scholars whom the letter has killed nine times over, are invariably the psychopomps of the rest. I stipulated that I should be free to make my derivations in complete disregard of the Tower of Babel; I would not be bound by the deliberate confusion of tongues that his jealousy on that occasion had short-sightedly prompted.

At this he sulked and I went to bed. (I write this in the early morning.) As soon as I was asleep he came into my room disguised as an angel and wrestling with me all night tried to bring me round to his idea. At dawn, when we were both exhausted and I had sprained my knee and torn a muscle in my thigh, I told him downrightedly that I would withdraw my offer altogether if he continued to resort to these Pentateuchal methods of physical persuasion. So, with a bad grace, he yielded and called the name of the place such-and-such, some name that, not being a Hebrew scholar, I am unable to record. *For he said*, 'That was the best wrestle I have wrestled since Peniel.'

September 28th

"Thinking to-day of the indifference of my people — their unreadiness to attend divine service, their constant violation of their marriage-promises, their frequent taking in vain of my Name. But this indifference is more apparent than real. The unreadiness to attend divine

service, for instance, is due solely to my failure to interest myself in the adequate staffing of my elder churches, or to provide a type of service suited to modern needs. The habit of religious assembly still remains strongly rooted in my people; as the crowds at political elections, football and baseball matches, horse-races and cinemas certainly prove. Indeed the conflict between the Church and what is known as the World is at bottom merely a convenience of emphasis.

Similarly in the violation of marriage-promises: adultery is really no more nihilistic than is the World. It is conducted nowadays with as careful a ritual as marriage. The violating act is committed in the locked room of an obscure hotel, the erring woman signs herself in the hotel register with the name of the adulterer, and the sense of shame towards me is as strong as in so-called worldliness. In fact, ceremonial adultery, with its sequel of ceremonial divorce and re-marriage, is a roundabout way of strengthening marriage proper—which has been losing all sense of shame towards me and becoming a mere social geniality. As for the taking of my name in vain; any frivolous evocations of me always reveals an embarrassment in the offending party that quite justifies my forgiveness. I have never visited punishment on anyone for profanity alone. In my eyes all things are, in the last analysis, equally vain and trivial. The only insult is in the assumption that I do not know this.

The truth of the matter is that I am an evolutionary deity, and cannot reasonably expect my people to be more than polite to my more old-fashioned aspects. I admit that I have developed very slowly. In those early days, for instance, I had no such thing as fatherhood. I was very

innocent, and had not yet formulated any theory of causality; I only used words denoting likeness and so I did not have any idea that man begat children. Sex was a delightful experience and I had observed in my quality as juju that it was common to all animals and that the sight of courtship between animals affected men and women to imitate them; but it never entered my head that the sex-act either in animals or in men and women produced children. You will observe the incredulity with which modern civilised children, when enlightened, greet such an idea as 'Father planted the seed of you in Mother.' And since men and women and children all slept together in those days without any suspicion that adultery, rape or incest would one day be held reprehensible, it was most unusual for a woman to reach even her twelfth year without sexual experience. Therefore, there being no old maids discoverable to prove that male insemination is necessary for childbirth, but there being on the contrary plenty of women who were barren in spite of constant male attention, it never occurred to me that sex had any connexion with childbirth. Childbirth had of course a great fascination for mankind; and in my divine capacity as Mother I won great worship. These were pastoral days and my people counted on the fertility of their flocks for the support of life. A mother of the tribe who bore numerous children (even though most of these never reached maturity) influenced the flocks to be similarly fertile. As the mother of sets of twins I was held in particular reverence. I was called the Great Mother; or Latona, which means the Giver of Plenty. I used to act as general mother to all tribes and families, settling their hunting and fishing differences and generally keeping

them from conflict. I did this by correlating the jujus and tabus to the general convenience.

It was something like this: If there were two tribes in a valley and the meat in that valley was wild goat and deer I named one of the tribes the Deer Tribe and the other the Goat Tribe. I told the Goat Tribe that if anyone of them killed a goat it would be like killing himself, he would die: and I told the Deer Tribe that if anyone of them killed a deer he would die. But I told them that all the tribal dances of the Deer must be done in deer-skin and those of the Goats in goat-skin. So in this way there was meat for all; the goats ate the deer and the deer ate the goats. They had to live in friendship, for the Deer had to call upon the Goats for their deer-skins and the Goats on the Deer for their goat-skins. Then because deer-skins were dappled, on the juju principle I forbade the Deer to pluck apples from the tree (for fear of wronging what they naturally regarded as a kinswoman) though they must ritually eat them; and because of the resemblance between the pear and the udder of the goat I forbade the Goats similarly to pluck pears from the tree, though they must ritually eat them. Hence came exchange of deer-skins for goat-skins and apples for pears and over all the earth the spread of good if somewhat silly behaviour.

As Great Mother I began also to regulate sex for the furtherance of inter-tribal amity. I made it tabu for goat-man to lie with deer-woman, or for deer-man to lie with goat-woman. But the girl children of the Goat Tribe I called fawns, and of the Deer Tribe, kids. So that when they were of marriageable age they went over—fawn to deer, kid to goats, each to the other side of the valley, and remembered their brothers with friendship. It was a

marriage as yet only in a tribal sense, for the woman had no husband but all the men of the kin-tribe in which I enrolled her. It was thus that I prevented incest between brother and sister, or between father and daughter, and prevented the too early abuse of girls. And I summoned the wizards and ordained similar ties within the tribe, so that each household should be given a special quality — a tabu and a juju by which the tribe was bound to this household for some prime need, and this household to the tribe. And in the household also there were tabus: the woman might not set foot in the canoe to catch fish, nor the man touch the udders of the flock to milk them. All were bound to all. As Great Mother I was not a mere shame-wizard dispensing juju or tabu: I was the Name Giver, thereby ruling. I gave the names to tribes and households and the names given wisely made for kinship. When as Great Mother I had named all my tribes and households, I then gave authority to the mothers of households to name their daughters when they reached marriageable age. They were named after the lesser birds, beasts and creeping things and bound by their tabus.

It was in this way that I made my great discovery. If there was a woman called Ptarmigan bound by the ptarmigan tabus and she went over to the other side of the valley, she could only mate with a male Ptarmigan — her mother's brother, living on the other side of the valley, having previously seen to it that a male child of his house was named in the ptarmigan name. If the male ptarmigan were to die before she came, she had to remain a virgin until another ptarmigan should be named, for she could only mate with a ptarmigan. But it might be that she was of a quarrelsome disposition or afflicted with some loathsome

sore, or blind, and when the mother's brother had once found her a mate, and the mate had died, he could not readily find another for her. She remained a virgin in her mother's house and had no children. So it was that I remarked platitudinously at different times: 'No male juju, no going across the valley. No going across the valley, no sexual experience. No male juju, no sexual experience. No going across the valley, no babies.' I made a chant of this, a dirge to be sung by the virgins when they felt melancholy, to ward off any accident to their destined mates that I in my capricious aspect of Destructive Jealousy might cause. Finally, this chant became shortened to a single refrain. 'No sexual experience, no babies,' concentrating their two greatest griefs. But besides being a lament it was also a truism, as if to say, 'Trouble never comes singly'—for obviously if it comes singly it is not trouble. Then from a truism it turned into a deduction: to blame the second trouble on the first seemed to reduce them to only a single trouble. I made a chant in juju likeness to protect the flocks and herds from infertility, as well as to console in case of infertility—shortened to 'No ram, no lamb.' By juju likeness I made other chants and reduced them to simple refrains such as 'Red in the morning is the shepherd's warning. Red in the night is the shepherd's delight,' and 'What the eye don't perceive, the heart don't grieve,' and many others. I noticed that wherever my people tried their hand at this sort of composition without my assistance the results were, as often as not, incorrect or ridiculous. Being as it were in the midst of life they could not distinguish as clearly as myself between what was meaningless event and what was significant experience. In

localities where my presence was only dimly apprehended, I sometimes found the virgin's chant reduced to 'No babies, no going across the valley,' which was ridiculous in the sense that a woman should first have babies if she wanted to cross the valley, and incorrect in the sense that if a woman with sexual experience proved barren it was because she had not crossed the valley.

So it was that I invented logic, the rule that wherever the grasp of essentials was weak, sequence must be the only truth. And cause and effect, and agency; and so paternity. Because I invented paternity and logic in the same breath I permitted the two to be paired by juju. But of course the virgins were the actual discoverers, for me, both of paternity and logic."

September 29th

"Much of the slowness of my development has been due to the difficult nature of an instrument without which, however, I could never have gone as far as I have. There has always been something constraining about it. Even now the tabu against its mention is still so strong that there is no native word in the English dictionary that can be used without offence to describe it. Which is only one more evidence of its inductility. Eventually I found that the only way of dealing with it was to become it. I became it, in the name of Phallos.

My self-education as Phallos was along familiar juju lines, but every theme was subordinated to the major one of fertilisation. Every newly invented civilising instrument from the spindle to the ploughshare was lent phallic authority to busy itself procreatively in the service of man; and the culminating triumph of this metaphorical period

came with the invention of fire by the imitative friction of a hard stick in a groove of soft tinder wood. Language became permeated with this phallic technique. I arranged that the names of all things that belonged to man as maker were male, and those that belonged to woman as maintainer were female. All things that were phallic in shape or action were male, and all things that were anti-phallic were female. And though later I faded out in my aspect of Phallos in its physical sense (while keeping fatherhood in its metaphysical sense), my phallos-language remains as gender; English is almost without gender and, therefore, more suitable than any other to my present mood. I regret this male and female tediousness, though it was, as I say, a necessary part of my evolution. Even now I cannot break myself of the habit of thinking of myself as male.

Those were absorbing if anxious days. Soon I was the Father, the Master, Baal, a disembodied spirit. I lived on a high tree-covered mountain except when I came among the tribe, and my function was to make things grow. I dwelt, potentially, in every man as Phallos, and I had a particular representative called Wizard or King or Priest in every tribe. I had alternative residences, in underground caves in some regions, in islands across the sea in others, in the recesses of the jungle in still others; but for the most part it was a mountain kingdom. The pinetrees and the snakes and the winds and the mists, my chief physical attributes, were there.

Heaven was my alibi and ghosts were my other people. The mountain was tabu to all my living men, unless the high priests, and anyone else who climbed its slopes, died. From Olympus to Kilimanjaro, from Sinai to

Popocatapetl, the mountain was sacred to me. It was really only one mountain variously distributed, as the theologians make plain when they tell of a mountain that followed me once, when I was a God of Intoxication, from India to Greece. Mohammed admitted that he had to go to the mountain because the mountain would not come to him; Moses had to go to the mountain for the same reason. *Ubi mons, deus.* Wheresoever the mountain was, there was I also. The mountain came to me, not I to the mountain. Those were very absorbing days."

September 30th

"My phallic period was particularly strenuous, because it required of me such specialised singleness. I have never been able for long to identify myself completely with any one rôle. As soon as I had dignified the phallos sufficiently to give man an abiding interest in it I relaxed into plurality. I became a family. In any case it was anomalous for me to be Phallos with no female counterpart of my own size and powers. So I became a Great Mother once more, and I and myself ruled. And for children we had the Sun God and the Deep Sea God, and the Foam Goddess, and the God of Intoxication and the Goddess of Female Beauty and the God of War and Diana and the Artificer God and several more. They were all me. As the head of the family I was Rain Father. Naturally the usual family difficulties resulted. As Artificer God I naturally had been married to the Goddess of Female Beauty, in her aspect of anti-Phallos, who was my chief inspiration; the ritual of tools remaining a predominantly phallic affair. But as God of War I naturally fell into the arms of this Goddess in her aspect of Arduous Love, so

that as the cuckolded Artificer God I was naturally jealous. And as The Master of All, married to the mother of grown sons and daughters, I naturally fell middle-agedly in love with young women of mortal kind and ravished them; the children of such unions being demi-gods. As the Unforeseeable, I had every excuse for these occasional phallic caprices, but as the Mistress of All I was naturally jealous. The eternal jealousies of Heaven became a subject of jest among mortals. Many heroes were fathered on me by virgins, who were not really mine. I certainly knew Leda, Europa, Danäe, Alcmena; and certainly Perseus, Theseus, Hercules, Castor and Pollux — to confine myself merely to Greek mythology — were plainly sons of mine, and Helen plainly a daughter. But the paternity claims made against me on behalf of tens of thousands of heroes of merely historical origin and importance do not interest me in the least.

When eventually marble shrines came to be erected for us on our mountain sanctuaries, I insisted on a separate one being built for each of us. The hostility between ourselves was now open, and often as Juno I would support one nation against another supported by myself as Jupiter. I came to see that this antagonism could only bring deity into disrepute. I decided to sweep away the whole theogony in a final suicidal battle between ourselves and re-emerge as a sole unified deity. I chose a people of singular gifts for developing along these lines. To show that they were my people I gave them my name — the Ju people or the Jews. They knew me first as a god of infinite appearances; I lived on every hill as a local Father, in pinetree or monolith, and at every fire-side as a wooden image or teraph. My chief habitation, however,

was in a hill-temple at Jerusalem, where a particular suite of rooms, lavishly plated with gold, was simply furnished with a throne, a table and a candlestick for my use when I was in human shape. I decided to vacate all my lesser dwellings and live solely here. I gave orders to cut down all the pine trees, overthrow all the standing-stones and cairns and destroy all the teraphs. I decided to be a Great God with a singleness worthy of my plural breadth. I took no wife and refrained from frolics with mortal maidens. I had no relatives and no allies. I refused to recognise myself in any earlier aspects as the gods or goddesses of other peoples: 'my people' meant my peculiar people. When I had the opportunity I delighted in destroying the sanctuaries of the gentiles. . . ."

But now God's time was up, or mine was. I explained that I had only used him as a stop gap between then and now, and that he must not expect more of me than the ephemeral sympathy that any journalist feels for a story so amenable, by its very vagueness, to experimental treatment. He was plainly disappointed. 'But I was just coming to the most exploitable part of the story, the point where I decided that jealousy and unsociability could be overdone, and where at the sack of my city and the defilement of my private apartment, I fled away to the catacombs of Rome to begin a revised polytheism in the guise of a benevolent monotheism. I would like to get in about my son. He was such a fine fellow, was poor Mithras, and truly worthy of his Virgin Birth — I was indeed sorry that I was forced to sacrifice him.'

'Please, . . .' I said.

'Well,' he said, resignedly, 'I see that you can spare no

more of your valuable time. Nevertheless, I think that I shall go on with the story myself, now that I am warmed up. Perhaps you may be interested in seeing how I handle it. Would you mind if I send it you in chapters as I write it? You know more about what the modern publisher wants than I do, and your advice would be of the greatest assistance to me.'

I replied that I should be only too glad to do anything I could for him, to make up for having left him in the air like this, and, if he wished, I would see the book through the Press. We parted amicably.[1]

[1] [Note.—July 24th, 1930. In October last I received a chapter marked 'Alpha.' Since then nothing; until to-day a further chapter, evidently the concluding one, marked 'Omega.' It seems unlikely, however, that the intermediate chapters have gone astray in the post. He has always named himself the beginning and the end, the first and the last, and it has always been assumed that he is also the middle. But I see no valid reason for supposing this to be so. I am of opinion that from Beta to Psi has gone astray in himself. Therefore I am printing the chapters Alpha and Omega as the final literary result of his kind industry. The post-mark in both cases, by the way, was Los Angeles, California.]

ALPHA AND OMEGA OF THE AUTO-BIOGRAPHY OF BAAL

ALPHA

I

It will be difficult to convince even the most ignorant or even, on the other hand, the most intelligent of my readers that I am the actual author and editor of this book: the author and editor, that is to say, in any direct or particular sense, as when I wrote the Pentateuch and the Koran or edited the Septuagint translation of the Bible. It will no doubt be conceded that in a universal or indirect sense, as the accredited author of everything in the world and out of it, I did indeed write or, if you will, inspire or, at the very least, authorise it. But I can well foresee that the exegetists will treat the idea of direct authorship as a vulgarism. I admit that it reads most unlike my early work. I admit that it surprises me myself. But I am indeed, I assure you, writing every word of it with my own hand, and in English, the most widely spoken of modern languages, not Greek, Latin, Hebrew or any other of those that are dead. It must be recalled that not only have I always moved in a mysterious way my wonders to perform but that I have become, with the assent of my most prudent churches, an evolutionary Deity. Evolution implies a progress, and a progress implies records of progress. So far my writings have all been static. This is the first testament of my evolutionary series. To be sufficiently immediate the

testament has necessarily to be in the form of biography; to be sufficiently circumstantial it has, moreover, to be autobiographical biography; and to achieve the world-wide circulation proper to a book of this nature it has, further, to be popular autobiography. Or, if you will, autodiography.

It will be noticed that I am using, as a matter of literary good-manners, not my principal name, which would look a trifle overwhelming on the dust-cover of an octavo volume, but a subsidiary and even somewhat invidious one that I have not used for a number of centuries. It is, to compare great with small, as when a Crowned Head on a mission to a neighbouring country, with the intention, perhaps, of forming an important matrimonial alliance, designates himself Baron So-and-So, a title held by his ancestors before they advanced themselves to princely rank; and thus frees himself and the court he is visiting from the embarrassments and expense of royal salutes and ceremonial welcomes. Nobody is, of course, deceived by the incognito and he does not intend that they should be. His train, a special one, is met at the Frontier by the Prime Minister, the Grand Chamberlain, and the Commander-in-Chief of the Forces, and he is given a splendid suite of rooms in one of the smaller royal palaces for the whole length of his stay. Baron stands for King. His business is conducted not less conclusively than if the crown were on his head and the orb in his hand; but the formalities are easier. And so here. I do not wish you to read this book kneeling; read it sitting, standing, lying or in any position that you may choose; and if you have no paper-knife at hand and are in a hurry, cut the pages roughly with your fore-

fingers. But remember who the author is, compose your hearts, and be thankful.

I take the opportunity of making a statement here about the last two important works that have appeared in recent years more or less directly associated with my name. They were both published in the United States of America during the latter course of the nineteenth century. The quality of my authorship in these two books is not at all the same. Let me speak of *The Book of Mormon*, the first published. One of my prompt acts on realising myself as an evolutionary Deity was to put to a proof my newly restored and enlarged sense of humour, which while I was a conservative Deity had been in virtual abeyance—a constant humiliation to me. What more natural than that I should now write what was, in effect, a parody of my former compositions, a ridiculous fake-antique? You will no doubt recall the books of Mosiah and Sam and Alma and that introductory testimony concerning the plates of gold and the crystal spectacles; I had much delight over them. But what delighted me most was that I succeeded in finding so devout and earnest a man as Joseph Smith to take it literally and seriously and not only take it literally and seriously but prevail upon others to take it literally and seriously and even act on it. This burlesque-bible sent a handful of somewhat unbalanced but gratifyingly me-fearing men out into a proper wilderness, where they founded an indisputable New Jerusalem, and lived joyfully together in brotherhood, and made that wilderness blossom like any Canaanitish rose; and, until overcome by better-armed forces, defended their little kingdom more stoutly against the hosts of Midian than

any other people of mine have done since the siege of Old Jerusalem itself. I have always admired the Mormons, but have not, as it happens, visited Salt Lake City since the occasion when they ambushed a detachment of United States militia and hewed them in pieces with axes. It was so witty a reminiscence of Exodus that there was no occasion afterwards for any further illustration of the points I was making (for the benefit of Pope, Archimandrite, Rabbi, Archbishop, Caliph and the rest of them) that it is never too late in time for a new Book to appear and that faith is greater than literary style and that even in a me-forsaken modern country like America I can always find my Joshuas and Mohammeds if I need them. Pope, Archimandrite, Rabbi and the rest replied in their hearts, which I read, that Mormonism proved nothing. With the rapid industrialisation of the world and the equally rapid dissemination of popular culture there would soon be no theological romances like Utah possible, and therefore no occasion for further Books. I could not write, they protested, a business-man's or a business-woman's Bible. It would be a case, henceforward, of the old books or no books at all.

At this challenge I decided to write *Science and Health: with the Key to the Scriptures*. But it went greatly against the grain to write a deliberately tedious book that was not even a parody; so I prevailed on a certain Mary Baker Eddy to do it in my name. I supplied her with copious notes and she worked them up very creditably. But it was not, at first, quite what I had intended it to be —I wanted literature that was utterly soulless and undistinguished and she could not resist putting in sym-

pathetic personal touches about how often she thought babies should be washed and whether wives of dissolute husbands should be allowed to hold real estate. I could not prevail on her to remove these passages, but at least I persuaded her that further printings should be edited by a business committee of her followers, now known as 'Christian Scientists.' The result was so nearly what I had counted upon that I am at times half-ashamed of admitting myself the author. Yet the sales of *Science and Health* are already seriously rivalling those of the Bible. The elders of my other Churches take this very hard.

I signalled my little triumph plainly enough by inspiring the editorial committee to add an appendix to the book (of which, by the way, I have never, for business reasons, permitted a cheap reprint), emphasising the financial stability of Christian Science, and making particular reference to the cost in millions of dollars of this and that church of the new faith. But to counteract the impression that immediately arose that Christian Science was not really a religion but an unsuperstitious money-making concern with *Science and Health* as the Company prospectus I reappeared in my ancient quality of Mana or 'Inness.' Undismayed by the ban that Mary Baker Eddy had put in the glossary (without consulting me, I may add) on the use of the word 'In' in any sense of 'divine mana' or 'immanence,' I planted a superstition, which immediately took root, that great virtue resided in what she no doubt called the 'material' or 'illusively substantial' pages of the book; its very presence in a house, even unread, even hidden in a cupboard or at the back of a forgotten drawer, would, I hinted, be of

efficacy in protecting the house from sickness, adversity or, according to the accepted Scientific phrase — Error. The more devout the Christian Scientist the more strongly did he believe this. Yet at the same time I combatted the contention that a romantic, that is to say, a *height-and-depth* feeling, is necessary to religion and that it must be implicit in any new Book; I effected this by, as it were, levelling all the high hills and filling in all the fruitful valleys of ordinary religious emotion. There was no place in my new faith for institutions like celibacy or polygamy, for mass-frenzies or despairs, for fasting or feasting, for hermits or soap-box populists. Everyday business was not to be prejudiced by even extreme saintliness of heart.

I went further: I succeeded even in flattening out the personal emotions of my new congregation. The most single-hearted of them, instead of acquiring, as was the case with the most single-hearted members of my elder churches, particular devotions to individuals within the faith — so that they might see me, as others had put it, shining in the eyes of Sister Anne or Brother Aloysius — purged themselves entirely of differentiated personal feelings towards their kind. I have often seen a brother of the Episcopal or Presbyterian churches much flattered at his first meeting with a sister of the Christian Science faith, misled into believing her apparently warm-hearted address to be a particular mark of personal sympathy. I have laughed at his discomfiture when he found on a second meeting that there was no progress to be made and that the same warm-hearted greeting was extended to every other casual acquaintance without discrimination. I remember too the disgust of a certain inter-

nationally famous research-psychologist, who had perfected a method of dividing the human race into a number of distinct categories, the members of each being characterised by the same, as he expressed it, 'compatible emotion groups' according as they reacted preferentially to the different graduations of colour on the spectrum — when he discovered that convinced Christian Scientists, on undergoing the test, give an entirely negative reaction. Christian Scientists are nearly too good to be true: I did what I did a little too well. Perhaps the most regrettable feature of their success is that, since the state of Utah has been linked up by road, railway and radio with that of Massachusetts, *Science and Health* has been slowly but surely displacing the *Book of Mormon* even in Salt Lake City itself. The only readable chapter that I permitted them is the one, in the *Key to the Scriptures*, in which the whole authority for the theory of error is based on the double account, in the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis, of my creation of the world. It had always vexed me a little that the Jews after the Captivity had been so anxious not to throw away any scrap of my writings, that they had bound up in the Roll of the Pentateuch even a rough draft that happened to survive of the first chapter of Genesis. This duplication — which occurs elsewhere of course in the Bible, notably in the historical books of the Old Testament and again in the synoptic Gospels — I now humorously justified by making one chapter stand for truth and one for error; I may add that this is the only part of the book that I did not allow Mary Baker Eddy to work over: she copied it directly from my notes.

II

In the beginning (which is how I have begun two or three of my books) I began. But do not imagine that I began at once as Omnipotence, as Infinity or as The Creator. That view is both unhistorical and irreligious. The much-derided dating of the Creation, which, with my sanction, is given in the margin of the Bible as 4004 B.C. (although the First Egyptian Dynasty had already occurred somewhere about 6000 B.C.) is, in the modern time-sense, approximately correct. For I did not until about that time reach that stage of beginning in which I was able to create the world. Until 4004 B.C. I merely dwelt in the world in a scattered and irresponsible way. I cannot recall how long ago it was that I first began to live – to live, that is, in any recognisable way – because in the beginning I was not yet acquainted with the concept of time, and so there was no time. And when time began (as a new creation of mine, let it be understood) it began, according to modern reckoning, in a very haphazard and disordered manner. For instance, in the land of Ur at about the time which we now call 4004 B.C. but which of course was quite differently described then – as a matter of fact in terms of years that had elapsed since the Flood – it was recorded that the eight Kings who had lived in that country before the Flood had reigned no less than two hundred and forty-one thousand years between them; but that I had created the universe in only six days. But according to what I may call modern-retrospective time, the earth created itself several billion light-years ago, the universe created itself several billion light-years cubed ago, and I began

perhaps one million, perhaps five hundred thousand, perhaps only fifty thousand years ago. I do not know yet exactly when it was, in terms of modern time, that I first began. Perhaps when I write another book of this evolutionary series I shall know. And I shall be able to state more exactly in modern retrospective time just when I created time by simple Suns and Moons. I seem to remember it as about 15,000 B.C. Years were a later invention. But at present, as I say, I can make no accurate statement about the date; I can only write about the condition of my own first beginnings and those of time.

It will strike my readers as excessively strange that in spite of my well-known attributes of omnipotence and omniscience I am not able to gratify curiosity on points of such prime historical interest as these. But by analogy I can readily explain this paradox. At the time of my writing these words His Majesty the King of England is the ruler of many hundreds of thousands of square miles of territory in the interior of New Guinea, which not only has he not himself visited, nor any of his ministers, but which have never yet been visited by any single one of his subjects or by any civilised person of any other nationality. The existence of these lands is merely assumed by geographers. The head-hunting tribes which are believed to inhabit them (and whether they do or not is, I confess, at present doubtful even to myself, for when we are together I am not omniscience or even organised knowledge but the most primitive Mana) know nothing of this claim to sovereignty on the part of the King of England. It is potential or, if you like, anticipatory sovereignty. One of these days the

country will be penetrated, subdued, surveyed and civilised; but—because of international agreements—solely by agents of the King of England and by those of no other sovereign. Even now, if a member of one of these retired tribes happened by some accident to emerge from his jungle fastness and visit the nearest coastal depot of civilization, and if he then decided not to return but to take ship and travel further, he would be legally entitled not only to claim all the local rights of a British-born subject but even to apply to the representative of His Majesty in those parts for a British Foreign Office Passport; which would secure further rights for him in France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Holland, their dependencies and possessions and even in the U.S.S.R. themselves if he had a cultural interest in visiting them. So with me: much of my dominion is quantitatively potential or anticipatory: indeed so great a percentage of the whole as may be mathematically represented by the figure $99.\dot{9}$.

It is of course the failure to observe the significant and even vital difference between the numbers $99.\dot{9}$ and 100 that have led many practical men to dismiss me in their hearts as an impostor and non-existent. Fools! *I am*. 'I am' is what I told Moses long ago and it is good to say it here again. If I were not, it would not be possible to distinguish between these two numbers. But it is clear that they differ, and the difference between them is, you must understand, myself. The infinitesimality of my actual as opposed to my accredited dominion makes me the more susceptible, in my evolutionary character, to eventual infinitude; in the meanwhile, however, I am obliged to confine myself to approximations which convey that I am progressing without noticeably immediate results.

In the beginning, then, I began. I began as the vividly felt but impossible to be expressed difference between things that seem practically similar. More specifically between the way that men make or do things and the way that things make themselves or happen. This beginning was when men were in a transitional stage between the thinking of animals or the more rudimentary organisms, at the most a mere preliminary to action, and the thinking which does not necessarily lead to action and yet is somehow more active than dreaming or remembering. Do not misunderstand me as saying that I was a man myself at this stage. That was a much later development: I began as disquiet working upon the mind of the troop. I was not, as some have suggested, a creation of that mind; allow me to reassert that I worked upon it.

When man was a pithecanthrope or gorilla-like creature he had no disquiet. If his limbs twitched in a fever so that he could not control them easily it did not surprise him that they would not do what he wanted them to do. He did not even say 'Fever.' He rolled and tossed about until the fever subsided and he felt weak but able somewhat to control his limbs. If another and smaller of his members happened to trouble him by unintended movement he humoured this pleasurable annoyance in one or other of his customary ways. In neither of these disturbances did he ponder upon or even notice the difference between what is now called voluntary and involuntary action. But when, while evolving from pithecanthrope to man, he began to notice (though not yet to ponder on) the difference, I potentially began.

I began potentially in many more ways than these. For

instance, there were mushrooms found growing and sometimes it was not possible to prophesy by smell or sight whether the mushrooms would be wholesome or poisonous. Fish were similarly ambiguous; and shellfish; and roots. Again sometimes snakes would bite and sometimes they would not; and again one year there would be plenty of berries on a bush and the next year none at all; or plenty of game in a wood and the next year none. There were no means of forecasting these important issues. And there were old age, sickness, death and childbirth to notice. The differences were, it can be imagined, easier to notice when things seemed to be wrong or unnatural than when they seemed to be right or natural. Thus it was that when I started actually and no longer potentially, when man became what is now retrospectively called *homo sapiens* I started, not as pleasing excitement or noble serenity but rather as unpleasant disquiet.

I began first as the difference, and I began next as the problem of the difference, from which I won my first name. I made man ask 'Why?' meaning really 'What is it making the difference?' My name therefore was 'Why?' It was only a primitive question, you will understand, but it expected an answer. The answer was, of course, 'Why!' It was not 'Because,' since the concepts of cause and effect were undifferentiated as yet. 'Why?' and 'Why!' were the same word, indistinguishable even in vocal inflexion. 'Why!' echoed the disquiet of 'Why?' or, as spoken then, 'Lama?' My punctuation marks of interrogation and admiration are therefore misleading except as they denote question and answer. There was only one word echoed by the answered to the questioner;

and it was Lama. For Lama? stood for Why? and Lama! stood for Why! and so they called me Lama-Lama.

The children of civilised people still begin pithecanthropically and take many years to begin to notice differences—the difference, for instance, between grass and stones, between grass that grows and stones that do not grow. After a while they begin to be *sapiens* and *ratiocinans* and to ask questions. They point to the grass growing and ask 'Why?' And their nurses or parents answer 'Because of Nature' or 'Because of Providence.' That to my mind is saying too much. They need only answer 'Why!' to children at that stage. Or at the most 'Because'; or they need only say 'Nature.' Nature is only another way of saying 'Because' or 'Why!' or 'Lama!' or 'Myself at the beginning.' I strongly recommend that children should be educated in an evolutionary knowledge of me, beginning with 'Why!' and continuing by easy stages until they reach their own historical level and so finally the time comes at maturity when they can have this book put into their hands and think no more about me. It is the biological method, or, if you like, it is the natural method, or Nature, or myself.

So it was that I began as Lama-Lama. Lama, it may be noted, is still the name that they use in many parts of the Orient for me in my holiest aspects. The Dalai Lama is myself when I visit Thibet.

III

I have translated Lama as 'Why?' rather than as 'How?' because 'Why?' is a more helpless word and meets with

a more hopeless answer than 'How?'; because indeed there is no answer in a final sense to any 'Why?' except 'Why?' the echo. If there were any other answer it would be the extinction of me. Though I have progressed enormously since the simple Lama stage I still reduce to Lama-Lama when in contemplation you strip from me the accumulations of history and tradition, and wherever (in any passionate social upheaval) history and tradition lose their persuasive force. I once made my servant David ask, 'Why do the heathen so furiously rage together?' and 'Why do the deceitful persons imagine a vain thing?' This questioning made the shortest of his psalms, for he could find no 'Because' to console him. He was experiencing severe troubles, though my anointed (for I chastened those that I loved, and usually indeed made them die early), so he asked these questions. (If my chastening had been only a little more lovingly severe—if it had been with David as it had been with Saul at Gilboa, he would have got no further than merely thinking 'Why?' and falling unprogressively upon his sword.) He made other Why? psalms such as 'Why standest thou afar off, O Lord?' and 'Why hast thou forgotten me, O Lord?', then later, in times of prosperity, he lengthened them with verses in praise of me as 'How?' When my son, Mithras, died a thousand years later, in his last filial salutation he reduced me to Lama. Like Saul's, his death was of his own choosing and even more calculatedly suicidal. I loved him, I chastened him and he died young.

History and tradition are the evasion of Why? with an answer to it, as if it were How? with a 'This is how!' instead of a 'Because.' Let me explain with a popular

instance, an easy dramatic situation. A soldier, a member of one of my best-known churches, lies dying in a hospital ward. He has been shot in the vitals by a member of another of my best-known churches (or perhaps of the same church): a bloody war duly fought in my name on both sides. (I will deal with this paradox later.) He groans and screams and calls out 'Why? Why?' And my accredited representative, a priest, hurries to his bedside and answers, 'It is His will,' meaning, of course, mine. He has answered perfectly correctly with the 'Why!' to the 'Why?'—his tones are even inflected with the echo of disquiet. The man's wife receives a telegram: 'Your husband dangerously wounded.' And while he is dying in hospital and groaning and screaming 'Why?' she is sitting sobbing in the kitchen of her house and whispering 'Why, Why?' To which her mother in the absence of a priest or other of my accredited representatives replies in the official way, 'It is His will.' But in each case the 'Why?' is not permitted to remain 'Why?' A second answer is given in each case to the question, as if it were a 'How?' My representative continues 'This is how' and hurries away, at once returning with a small vial of oil with which he anoints the man, saying a charm, distracting his mind from the disquieting difference between a natural unnoticeable gut and an unnaturally noticeable gut. The man dies, if not comfortably, at least more comfortably than he otherwise would have done. And she, his wife, is instructed by her mother to hurry to church to ask me what I can do for her husband; but while she is still washing her eyes to make them seem less red and changing into her Sunday clothes a telegram comes from the hospital to say that her requests can no

longer be met. But she comes to me, nevertheless, after a little more weeping. And at the church she again asks 'Why? Why?' and is again properly answered with my name. But my representative, in order to comfort her, as her husband has also been comforted, makes her a second answer: he answers as if to 'How?' with a wafer and a mouthful of wine, both administered in my name. And she is, somewhat at least, comforted.

When primitive African peoples, knowing me only in my earlier appearances, have come in contact with missionaries of the later me and have seen for the first time mirrors, guns, matches and Seidlitz powders, they have admired the Seidlitz powders more than any other of these wonders and referred to all the novelties as 'big medicine.' And have then called their own wonder-working utensils 'big medicine' too. Medicine is me in the early stage of How. Or if medicine seems too modern a word for so primitive a concept, let me give you Mana, or immanence of myself, as one less anachronistic; or, better still, let me give you Juju. Ju? meant How? and Ju! meant How! or, if you prefer it, 'This is how' or 'thus!' I became Juju after being Lama-Lama. The transition being, as you see, that men in disquiet asked 'Lama?' but my representatives, acting on my instructions, replied 'Ju!'; so that men after awhile grew into the habit of anticipating the answer and altered their question to 'Ju?' They only asked 'Lama?' when disquiet was so excessive that they forgot about 'Ju?'

Of times when I have been Lama-Lama naturally there is little to recount, beyond a series of surprises which I have from time to time sprung upon my people. As Lama-Lama I am beyond argument or propitiation. I

have been erupting volcanoes, deluges, explosions in powder magazines, cholera, treacherous friends, alligators, sharks, panics on the Bourse, despotic parents, revolution, famine, the gallows. I have even appeared in the form of delightful surprises—unexpected elevation to the Peerage, buried treasure, love at first sight, a spring of water in the desert. My name has been called upon, and my name has been spoken in answer and that has been all. History has then picked up the ravelled and broken threads, twisted them together, remarked 'Ju' in self-reassurance and continued her task. Many synonyms exist for me as Lama-Lama, among my favourites being Fate and Necessity. 'Necessity knows no law,' said the Romans. And the Greeks said: 'Necessity—she, the strongest god of all.' But for the rest of this book I shall call myself, in that respect, simply 'Why.'

Because I am so strong and terrible and unacquaint as Why and because I am so impossibly deaf to argument or propitiation, my representatives refer to me whenever possible in my character of Juju. Few peoples nowadays have the courage to worship me as Why, the Destroyer, setting me to dance on a heap of skulls. As Juju I am an easy-going and on the whole a merciful deity.

You must understand when I quote this example of the dying soldier and his consolable wife, that the Juju of the bread and wine and oil is merely a sentimental survival of me in a very early aspect: a reminiscence of the time when I was living in such an experimentally haphazard and disorganised manner that it may well be disputed whether or not I was living at all. As a central, organised and dominant deity I now rule, except for a few un-

friendly spots like the central forests of New Guinea already mentioned, over the entire globe; but, like every bearded elder, I live a good deal in memory of my beardless and irresponsible past.

Let me return to these beginnings, to myself as Juju. As the child of civilised parents points to-day to growing grass and asks 'Why?' so the man pointed and asked thirty thousand years ago. It was a far more important question to him than to the child, for his life depended on the answer. He saw the grass withering, and grieved that some of it was rye-grass, of which he was accustomed to eat the seeds, and that some of it was bamboo-grass, of which he made salads. The common grass was also of importance to support the herds of game which he hunted and which moved hundreds of miles away out of reach of his pursuit when the grass withered. (As yet he had no flocks of sheep and goats.) So when it withered he groaned and wept and cried 'Lama!' His helplessness began to weary me a little and I descended in the form of rain with a 'How!' in answer to his 'Why?' The grass sprang up again almost at once and the man cried 'Why!' with surprise to see it growing; but then he remembered the rains and added 'How!' meaning 'That was how!' Water for grass was the first 'How!' and for my rain-making I was, in the Southern lands of my origin, courted as Juju or Dudu of the Rain almost to the exclusion of all my other How's. Thus, when the time came, I ruled as Juno and Jupiter, male and female, all the other me's of the Parthenon. And as Dudu, or Dew as it is now written, which is to the ignorant a more why-ish form of rain, because it falls silently, I still descend on summer evenings to bless my thirsty fields and fill my needy

Dew-ponds. (I would have you notice that though my name Juju was a double one[1] originally it is no longer so: nowadays even the French, whose language I find very sympathetic, do not call me *Le bon Dudu*—or call Thursday, my name-day, Jujuday—but limit me to one syllable. That is because they have forgotten me in my ancient meaning and power of Likeness, which is the likeness of Ju? to Ju! the similarity of this How? to that How![2])

In the beginning, then, I was the power of Difference, the difference between blue skies and black, between withered grass and green grass, between fasting and feasting, between sickness and health. I was Why. And when thus recognised as Difference I let man rest for centuries in that recognition before reappearing as the power of Juju or Likeness, which is kind, which is numbers, which is plenty, which is prosperity and protection against very many of the commoner distresses of life.

IV

In these days as Juju or How-How I was supreme; I had not invented 'Because' as answer to 'Why.' I limited all reasoning to likeness; causal sequence was in the distant future. Observing that water was How! for making the

[1] Lama-Lama also was a double word; but the second syllable was not for likeness so much as for surprised or despairing reassertion of the first. Why-Why is overwhelming grief or joy; How-How introduces practical repair of damage or prudence in the face of unlooked-for prosperity.

[2] Only the Welsh, a simple people and much beloved by me, still exclaim Duw! Duw!, which the English translate incorrectly as 'God, God!' but which really means, in the vernacular, 'Now is that not just like it!'

grass grow, men brought water in skins from the river, at my instance, of course, to pour like rain on the rye-grass, if ever it withered before the ear formed; and observing that it was from the wind-scattered seeds of the rye falling in mud of the river-bank that the new rye grew, they made themselves like the wind and whirled rye-seed in earth made wet like river-mud. Thus it was that they had sufficient food in time of harvest to be able to store some against times of dearth, and so needed less often to cry Why? But sometimes so little rain descended that there was no water even in the river, and there was drought and famine. They then gathered together and made the closest imitation of a rainstorm that they could muster. Man, woman and child, they assembled and, unless they happened to be negroes already, smeared their naked bodies with charcoal to imitate thunder-clouds and swung bull-roarers to imitate rising wind and blew ram's horns for thunder and waved torches for lightning and puffed out their cheeks for more wind yet and spat upon the ground for the first large drops of rain and, finally, in a manner which, from old habit or *tabu* (meaning Taba-Ju, meaning not-how or unlucky or ob-scene or please-use-a-periphrasis, an aspect of myself that I shall shortly explain), imitated the steady stream of rain hissing as it fell upon the parched ground. I beg you not to be scornful, such of you as are creatures of cause and effect. They made the rain through me, through me as Juju. I have rainmakers yet with the old skill: only twenty-eight years ago one who lived in the thirstiest part of Africa promised a shower of rain in my name on the Coronation Day of King Edward his Emperor. He made the promise weeks in advance, though the day of the Coronation fell in the

middle of the driest season of the year. And on that very day I signalled my approach with a steady murmur in the tree tops and followed in my black clouds and fell as refreshing rain. And the British High Commissioner and his staff were not astonished, having lived for many years in Africa and learned to recognise Juju as co-existent and co-powerful with Reason, which is a later aspect of me. They even recognised the appropriateness of the event; for in the Coronation ceremony, as they knew well, I appear as Juju rather than as Reason — with unction of oil, as the How of prosperity and ease, and with a crown, as the How of gratified passion, and with many other Hows of blessing. And in the throne itself I am imbedded, a most ancient and weighty How, Jacob's stone, cousin to the black stone of the Kaaba, the old rainmaker in my holy city of Mecca. And do not my priests, even in Caucasian lands, intercede with me for rain in time of drought? 'Baal, hear us, give us rain!'

As Juju I taught my people to catch game the which had now become wary of the approach of man. I taught them to crawl up to leeward of the grazing deer, like to like, on all fours like them, and wearing over their backs the skins of deer and over their heads the deer's branching antlers. They could by this means move close enough to hurl at the deer their (as now termed) Patagonian slings, thongs of woven creepers shotted at both ends with a stone to imitate a double-headed snake; like a snake the sling would coil around the beast's legs. Then, flinging off their deer-skins, they would spring up rattling like snakes and bite the beast in the veins of the neck, as snakes bite, until it died. Or they would kill in the manner of an

eagle, making a swooping juju boomerang; or they would use the arrow, a snake-bird juju feathered at its tail like a bird, poisoned at its tooth like a snake. Like the boomerang, the bow was bent in the shape of a bird's wings. Like . . .

I

I have now brought my story up to date, and you will no doubt be curious as to my immediate evolutionary intentions as they affect yourselves or your children. They are not yet very well shaped in my mind, but such as they are I am willing to present them to you, without prejudice of accuracy. There is no saying but that a sudden caprice may reverse some of my important decisions. I shall begin by outlining my intentions with regard to my churches.

In the first place I have no intention of allowing myself in the aspect of Reason to destroy all the old religious forms in which I am worshipped in my various earlier aspects. It is, for example, unthinkable that I should deny myself the Roman Catholic Church, an institution which has always performed its duty to me faithfully, and from which I have derived much solace. This Church, or this sort of Church, is necessary in certain conditions of life here on earth; not only necessary to communities inhabiting particular districts to which this method of worshipping me is the only natural one, but to individuals in other communities who find themselves at odds with their environment and have need of such a Church as a sanctuary from their buffetings. When I said 'Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven,' I gave the final justification of the Church of Rome.

All little children, all sheep without a shepherd, all those

pure in heart because unstable in mind, all the charming, the fanciful, the passionate, the devoted, the rebellious, the repentant, all those who find it impossible to live happily with no more than a sense of expediency or a fear of legal consequences to restrain their impulses, all baffled poets, all natural liars and dissemblers, all those who are chilled by my inhuman aspect as Reason, all those who have shame, all, all are the natural members of this spiritual kindergarten; where orphans, waifs and strays are welcomed by me with the greatest affection. The nonsensicality of the bed-time stories that I tell them troubles neither them nor me: I say to them, 'This is the story, children, and you must either listen to me or leave this pleasant fireside; for if you disbelieve you are no longer children and have no right here.' The stories that I tell them are mostly about what happened to myself and my friends in the Christian era. When they grow tired of the real stories and ask for more I humour them with stories of myself in previous aspects and of the friends I had then, but so as not to confuse them I tell them all as though they happened in the Christian era, and I do not let any troublesome thoughts intervene between them and their enjoyment of the story. Children like to hear of horrors; so, many of my stories are very cruel, about souls roasting in eternal flames, because when they were living on earth they performed certain bad actions, and some very extravagant, about dragons and angels and bottomless pits and invisible men and battles in the air. But they are all half-smilingly told and my children trust me to forgive them for their own little sins so long as they are sorry and own up; and they often nudge each other and say 'Papa is a kind man, really, and does not expect

much of us. After all, we are only children.' So we are very happy together. They do not even mind my appearance among them clad in a white robe, gouted red with drops from my forehead, and with a face twisted with pain, nor even the glass panel let into my breast to show underneath my flaming and lacerated heart. They touch the panel, whispering 'Poor, poor Father. It is all our fault,' and weep luxuriously, and the next moment they are laughing and even, on the sly, the little devils, making jokes about me.

When I say that no troublesome thoughts are allowed to intervene, I mean that if any child of mine says, 'Father, I don't believe that the whale *really* swallowed Jonah, because the whale in our anatomy book hasn't got a throat big enough,' I immediately put him into a corner and go on with my story. Then I say to him, 'Are you telling this story or am I? Don't you know that I can make a whale, if I want to, with a throat as wide as a church door? Don't you realise that I can do *anything*? I am a grown man and you are only a silly little child, now are you not? and only know what I have told you? How can you dare to disbelieve me?' If he then says that he is sorry I put him on bread and water for a day and then forgive him. But if he says, 'Well, show me a whale like that and I'll believe you,' I expel him for impertinently playing the grown-up, and tell the other children that when he dies I shall burn his soul for ever and ever and ever, and they say, 'It serves him right,' and beg me not to be angry with them too. I do not mind them looking at most anatomy books, and even books about science and religion, so long as they do not take them in properly; but there are a few books, the books written with the deliberate

and malicious intention of spoiling my stories, which I, of course, do not allow them to read.

My Protestant and Dissenting congregations are another problem; they still continue to worship me as the Story-teller, but they are aware that I do not mean to go on telling them stories forever. They realise that they are getting too old for stories now and must soon face the realities. Already, if a Protestant or Dissenting child puts that doubt forward about the whale that swallowed Jonah, I say, 'Now do not be so sure, my boy. I admit that the Right Whale cannot swallow a man, but what about the Sperm Whale and the Hump-backed Whale and the Narwhale? Your natural history book will probably be found to bear out my story if you look more closely into it.' Or 'Do you disbelieve my story of the Flood? Yes, I know that when I said that it covered the whole world that was an exaggeration, but I told you the story long ago when you were too little to understand the difference between the whole world and the Euphrates valley. It is a true story. I am not a liar. Leonard Woolley has been digging out there lately and actually found the thick layer of clay that the river brought down when it destroyed that early civilisation.' Or 'Yes, I admit, these are the facts of life. But I left you to find most of them out for yourself, because I think it is unsettling for a child to be told too much about that sort of thing. And there is a lot that you have not found out; if you ask me about it on your twenty-first birthday I shall tell you as much as I know myself.' I do not think that once I am as strongly and honourably established in the newer aspect as in the elder there will be any further need for intermediate education.

The Roman Catholic community will in those days have natural geographical limits; I do not intend to define these too carefully now, but it will probably be possible to say roughly, 'Catholicism is the religion of the citrous fruit belt.' The chief temporal power will be in the hands of the Rationalists, the wheat-land inhabitants, but they will find it injudicious to attempt to impose their system of thought on the Catholics, and will even, on my prompting as Reason, form Catholic Reservations where no rationalistic propaganda will be permitted and where blasphemy or adultery will be an offence punishable with the utmost rigour of ecclesiastical law. The Catholics will be content to be quaint and merry and to have too many holidays and to use mules and oxen and dress prudishly and to love garlic and secret societies and dictators, and to chatter in trains, and be cruel to animals; and the Rationalists, like uncles, will occasionally come to watch their nursery pageants with wistful looks and generous purses.

This Reservation system I intend to set on foot almost immediately in the totemistic South Seas—if it is not already too late, then in the devil-worshipping Central African jungle, later in India where contemplative religion will have a home, in China where the religion of manners will be perpetuated, and even in the Arctic regions among the not-yet converted Esquimaux. It will . . . (and so on).

II

But in the end? What in the end is to become of my people and me? This is the last chapter of my book, and

it must close, you say, upon the accustomed note of revelation. I admit that my mind is momentarily clouded; yet be sure that before I have done I shall have made the all-important announcement that you expect from me. Let me begin by recalling that in the chapter devoted to my genesis I contrasted my actual human dominion with my accredited or potential dominion of the universe: I showed it to be infinitesimally small—as it were, the difference in amount that intervenes between a round hundred and the figure ninety-nine-point-nine-recurring. Yet I insisted that this minimum amount, so far from being negligible, was most supremely important. For by that very amount the importance of this earth set in a relation with the rest of the universe might well be represented: and who of you, in his senses, would deny the very real importance of the earth? Most of you no longer, of course, hold the Ptolemaic view of the earth as being the solid centre of the universe around which the sun and moon and stars revolve; but you would not have me commit spatial suicide on your behalf by associating myself with an infinity in which earth was too trivial to be enumerated? No, in spite of the Copernican view, the earth has indeed so great because so immediate and so physical an importance to us earth-dwellers that, contrariwise, the remainder of the universe cannot by comparison be considered as having more than an honorary existence.

What say you that I am? A being charged with a unified external consciousness of the species man? I accept this definition if you understand it as eliminating rather than including the individual of the species. The individual has no external reality and cannot participate in

mass self-appraisement. I am the only mind, whether as to consciousness physically of the new directions that his particular affairs on this planet are taking, or rationally or intuitively of the structure of the rest of the universe, or metaphysically of any progress in his consolidation of himself into me. That is much, in any human sense: I am, as it were, the figure ninety-nine-point-nine-recurring when contrasted with the round hundred which is the total consciousness possible here on earth. It is, I say, much, it is almost infinitely much in the world of man's thought, but it is not the round hundred of the total sum. For the numbers differ, do they not? What then is the difference between them? This is a mystery. Some might offer one solution and some another, but the true solution is, 'the very difference between the two numbers, namely an aspect of someone other than myself.' Consider with me, if you will, this infinitesimal but supremely important other one. This being that is my Lama-Lama; if you like, my God.

In reading this story you have been shocked and dissatisfied with what I have told you; you have said, 'This is not my God; it is Old Nobodaddy of whom William Blake wrote, sitting aloft belching and coughing. This is not the God whom I worship.' Why have you said this? You have said this because I have been too honest with you, too joking, too friendly. I did not thunder or make a mystery of myself. You felt shame, the very shame of a gentleman's butler who is asked to sit down with the master of the house at the luncheon table—so far from feeling honoured by the invitation, he knows that as a butler he has been insulted. The master of the house is, after all, no gentleman, he concludes, and so he

may as well give notice at once, for he knows his station in life. But you cannot so give notice. I am the only master that you can know and serve; a masterless butler is no butler at all. Tell me what other master you can find and when you have described him I will prove to you that he is merely myself again in another aspect. And then answer me this: If the master of the house is not Baal, what will his butler be?

I ask you this in case you may snatch at the idea of my having a Lama-Lama and claim it as yours, as the true God. That cannot be. You cannot know my Lama-Lama. You can only know me. I mention the existence of such a being merely in order to be honest with myself: and when I speak of its nature you will look blank and own yourself totally uninterested in it. For I already read your mind: you think of my God as the immense Unknown God of the Universe in whose thought worlds or systems of worlds are as grains of sand in your own. You are wrong; for thought is a peculiar power local in this planet and has no parallels elsewhere in the universe. There are myriad other happenings in other suns and planets but they are only happenings in reference to human thought and so only potential happenings. They cannot be thought about except by human thought; happening itself is a mere concept of thought. This piece of information may provoke in you a desire for a new kind of humanly unthinkable thought to gratify your sense of my grandeur; postulate it by all means, but it still remains only an extravagant postulation of ordinary thinkable thought. How often must I beg you not to attempt to hoist yourself up on my account by tugging at your own boot-tags. Be content to stand on earth and

to view the empyrean, marvelling through a marvellous telescope.

I hear you complaining that it is this very telescope which awes you into a desire for the unthinkable. Comfort yourself, comfort yourself, my people. The infinitely small size of this planet Earth when compared with that of the star Betelgueux (which holds a million suns) should not make you shudder. Size is nothing without accessibility: Betelgueux is a mere spark in the night. We are thinking humanly; there is no other way. We cannot dispense with the materials of thought by which we think. And so even my God is a thought-God in so far as I am the God of you; to describe him in any other sense would be facetious. The centre of universal thought is the same as that of parochial thought—namely, man-thinking—so long as we are thinking. For you to envisage my God as an unthinkably extensive power of thought is to get no further than myself. By extending the radius of a circle to infinity you cannot plot the centre of infinity. My God is, in fact, mind working independent of me, a human mind; but I do not know where or how it works. I only know of it by knowing myself as the ninety-nine-point-nine-recurring of the possible hundred, the everything-but of something else, knowledge of which engrosses and distresses me perpetually. Do you remember my fable of the mistletoe, the disregarded tree not bound by my oath, that slew me once as the god Balder? That fable epitomises all my anxieties. I have tried to think of this other being as an ordinary superman, but this does not altogether satisfy me. Men and women have time and time again appeared with new gifts of the mind; but these have been perfectly

understandable signs that I had sent ahead of myself to act as reminders should I happen to forget what I was about. Buddha, Confucius, Jesus were men of this sort, to mention only three. Many of these men and women have been worshipped as me; many are still so worshipped and in a sense rightly as tokens of me. But this other being is not related to me in any ancillary sense.

I attempt to comfort myself by recalling that in spite of my recent disestablishment in every department of human experience—in dance, song, sex, verse, painting, sculpture, spiritism, mathematics, philosophy, astronomy, the natural sciences, finally even in religion itself, in spite of my disappearance as the spirit immanent in these things, I have always emerged triumphantly as the power which is beyond them, as the external consciousness of the human race, as the axiomatic life-force—known as Holiness in the age of frankincense, as Desire in the age of myrrh, as Power in the age of gold—to which the whole corpus of human experience must for ever make humble reference. But then again I question this 'for ever.' How was it that I suddenly became necessary to man in the first place? How did I suddenly disorder the sober balance of the unthinking natural scheme when, it may be said, the pithecanthrope was no nearer to *homo-sapiens* than were the dung-beetle or the bee? I was the impossible chance; the odds against me being impossibly great. Yet I happened; for, however great the odds are, if there are odds at all the number must eventually appear. What equally impossible chance may not and, as I say, must not, appear? Somewhere there is, was, or will be, another other than myself.

Do not misunderstand me: I am not here suggesting

that bees or dung-beetles will one day develop a restless and experimental consciousness and so a Baal of their own. Such a Baal would, in the last analysis, become, by a fusion of human and insectival interests, merely myself again. Indeed, I have already provided for such an eventuality by advising men to go to the ant, consider her ways and be wise, and by holding up the bee also as an emblem of useful citizenship. I have, I say, identified myself as the God of insects and beasts in so far as they can be considered to have a moral or rational consciousness. No, the human kind is at present a broad enough field of possible occurrence to speculate upon. This other being shall be capable of human thought.

Somehow, I therefore believe, though I cannot make it clear to myself, a being perhaps in human shape, yet perhaps not, will appear. I had better say, will appear, for I do not really feel that this has yet happened. And this being will not be for or of me, or yet even against me. It will be indifferent to me, wounding me more terribly than the mistletoe ever did. A deathless being, no doubt, humanly visible; but without aspects, therefore humanly unknowable; not worshipped, not martyred, left alone, of no kind.

This being, indeed, already has begun for me, as I began for man, as vague disquiet. I cry Lama? Lama? and it makes no answer, avenging on me the many capricious wrongs that I have done mankind. Soon my people will take notice; they will question and say: 'Baal is changed in our days: he is like a man in love or a woman at suck with her first child. Or, rather, like a man in a fear of God. Yet how can that be? There is no God but Baal.' They will not realise that my omniscience and omnipotence are

conditioned only by the appearance of such a being. And the more they notice, the more tortured will I be in myself, and the more hysterical in my rationalisation of all possible aspects of me, in an attempt to stand whole before my God and so deserve it. I will speed up the pace of evolution till my people gasp for breath and cry halt! But, until I make a 'How' of this 'Why' my anxiety must, I fear, be theirs.

PART THREE

BUT IT STILL GOES ON

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

Dramatis Personæ

Cecil Tompion:	*well-known novelist and poet.*
Dorothy Tompion:	*his daughter, a doctor.*
Dick Tompion:	*his son.*
David Casselis:	*friend to Dick, an architect.*
Charlotte Arden:	*friend to Dick and Dorothy.*
Jane Arden:	*her sister.*
Richard Pritchard:	*a poet from Wales.*

Elizabetta Behrens.
A Butler.
A Waiter.
Another: a Youth.

Time: The Present

ACT I

SCENE I. THE LIBRARY OF THE TOMPIONS' HOUSE AT HAMPSTEAD; LATE AUGUST.
II. THE SAME; EIGHT DAYS LATER
III. IN THE ROUGH AT A NEIGHBOURING LINKS; THE FOLLOWING DAY

ACT II

SCENE I. A WEST END OYSTER BAR; THE NEXT NIGHT
II. THE LIBRARY AT THE TOMPIONS'; THE NEXT MORNING

III. TENNIS COURT AT THE TOMPIONS'; THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON

ACT III

SCENE I. A ROOM IN DOROTHY'S HOUSE; THE FOLLOWING JANUARY
II. THE SAME; AT THE END OF MARCH
III. DICK'S LODGINGS; THE FOLLOWING NIGHT

ACT I

Scene I

Dick Tompion *and* David Casselis *in the library of the Tompions' house at Hampstead; late August. David in an arm-chair, facing the audience, smoking a pipe (right). Behind him is an open window with a view of a garden and a garden wall with fruit trees (right). There is a road beyond the wall: occasional traffic sounds are heard and once or twice the top of a lorry is seen over the wall. When the lorries go by the speakers stop because of the rumbling noise. David's age is thirty-eight. He is well-built, good-looking, nervous, tall, fastidious, ironic, never looks at anyone he speaks to, has a small apologetic cough, gives the impression of feeling himself under restraint. He takes great care of his clothes. Dick is walking about the room (left). He is thirty, small but strong-looking, pale face, black hair. He speaks evenly, without emphasis. Nothing surprises him, as a rule, or shakes him out of his composure. He is obviously a most self-contained character, and the strength of his feelings is deduced from the circumstances rather than indicated by his manner. He dresses neatly but unconventionally with an open-necked shirt. His attitude to David is casual but friendly. David's attitude to him is repressedly romantic. The room has book-cases all round with a table covered with magazines (left); also a large old-fashioned globe, plaster-casts of Shakespeare and Milton, and the usual literary encumbrances of the library of a successful literary man. Back (left) is another window overlooking the garden; under it a table spread with papers, obviously the writing-table of* Cecil Tompion.

DICK. I like the library, David. It's such a perfect give away of my father. Imagine being able to work in a room like this — plaster casts above, Persian rugs below, books all round, the current literary magazines behind, and all that litter on the table beside you — look, even photographs in silver frames, and a view of rose trees when you happen to look up from your work. Two hours before breakfast. Two hours after lunch. Three after dinner. That's his schedule. Three thousand five hundred words a day regularly. Besides poems. And letters — all carefully, carefully written for an eventual *Life and Letters of.* (*A knock.*) Come in.

Enter BUTLER.

BUTLER. This morning's papers, sir.

DICK. All right, Denman, put 'em out. (*Goes over to table.*) Saturday, is it? The five leading literary weeklies. No, David, look! here's another new one. Six. *Saturday Morning*, 'a new journal devoted to Art, Literature, Politics, Music, Science, etc.' Sixpence. Volume I, number 1. August 26th. And all the usual dead-heads in it.

Exit BUTLER.

'This week in Parliament.' 'Cinema notes.' Hullo! '*Shame:* A short story by Cecil Tompion.' (*Reads for a moment, throws it down. Walks about the room again.*)

DAVID. Is it any good, Dick?

DICK. Is what any good?

DAVID. Your father's story.

DICK. It was written in this room with the usual infiltration of plaster casts, silver photograph frames, rose-pergolas, art, literature, politics and music — not to mention motor lorries. Of course, it's good. What do you expect?

DAVID. Some of his stuff isn't as bad as the rest.

DICK *does not answer. Walks about the room, stops at the globe, which he revolves faster and faster: then suddenly stops it with the flat of both hands.*

DICK. The extraordinary thing to me, David, is: that it's finished and ended and over, but it still goes on.

Comes forward to where DAVID *can see him.*

DAVID. *What* still goes on?

DICK (*makes a rotary movement with his hand*). *It* still goes on, like—like the watch in the pocket of a dead man.

DAVID. Do you mean literature?

DICK. No, not just that. The whole sixpennyworth, with every possible etcetera. The whole doings.

DAVID. This human world, you mean?

DICK. Well, if you like. Have you ever considered how ridiculous a live person would feel in a world that was finished, and over, but still went on?

DAVID. Isn't this just another lament for *The Manner of the World Nowadays*? Wait a moment. *So many* . . . oh, I know:

So many pointed caps
Laced with double flaps
And so gay felted hats
Saw I never,
So many good lessons
So many good sermons
And so few devotions
Saw I never.

DICK. What's that?

DAVID. Sunday journalism of the reign of Henry VIII.

The streets so sweeping
With women's clothing
And so much swearing
Saw I never.
So many sluttish cooks
So new-fashioned tucking-hooks
(what's a tucking-hook?)
And so few buyers of books
Saw I never.

So few buyers of books. That's *your* complaint, isn't it, Dick?

DICK. Nonsense. They buy my father's by the hundred thousand.

DAVID. But not yours?

DICK. No, not mine. Why should they? I wonder sometimes that I ever sell enough to cover the cost of printing; that usually happens, though. I suppose I'm mistaken for a poet of to-morrow, and because I publish in limited editions and because nobody can make me out I'm regarded as a good buy. The knowing ones buy my hundred and fifty signed copies and put them down in pickle. They don't read them, of course; 'fine uncut condition' is their pride. The joke's on them, of course: the whole edition's in a fine uncut condition.

DAVID. You don't think that in 1960, say, they'll be rewarded for their foresight?

DICK. No! There's no reason to expect posterity to be any less turnip-headed. It'll still be reading my father's stuff probably. Or someone equivalently god-awful. What did you ask me? 'Was it my *complaint*?' David, sometimes I wonder what I'm doing talking to you as as though you were a friend. *Me* complain that the sort of people who buy my father's books don't buy mine?

DAVID. You could do with a bit more money, couldn't you?

DICK. Not really. He allows me three hundred a year out of his winnings. He loves making the money — he's never so happy as when he's writing a best-seller — and he loves giving it to me because he loathes me and wants me to feel dependent on him and jealous of his literary successes. And he expects me to have feelings of shame about taking the money. (*Chuckles.*) Three hundred is all I'll ever want. By the way, that poem. How does it end?

DAVID. On the necessary note of optimism:

God is neither dead nor sick —
He may amend all yet.
For better I hope ever —
Worse was it never.

DICK. It *would*, of course. That's just the difference.

DAVID. Between?

DICK. Between then and now. I mean: it's too late for amending the world now; the bottom has fallen out of it. The Sunday journalists and the politicians and the Church of course all pretend that it hasn't, and everyone else plays up to them. But it's no good. It's finished; except that it still goes on.

DAVID. Bad as all that? What's wrong with you to-day, Dick? (*Grabs his arm in a sentimental way.*)

DICK (*detaching himself and pretending not to notice*). David, you're eight years older than me. You went to Cambridge in 1912 (wasn't it?). When tucking-hooks were still in fashion, and the streets were still unaffectedly sweeping with women's clothing.

DAVID. Yes, I'm a good old pre-war vintage.

DICK. So you'll never be able to forget that the world had a bottom once. You'll go on for the rest of your life pretending it's there still.

DAVID. You're crazy, Dick. What are these *Lost Bottom Blues* about? Begin at the beginning. What *was* the bottom?

DICK. You can't understand if you think that I'm making a blues of it. I'm stating quite simply, just making a dry historical pronouncement, that the bottom of things, after working looser and looser for centuries, has at last fallen out: and that no public recognition has been made of what is after all the most important human catastrophe that's ever happened. I don't mean catastrophe in any tragic sense. Tragedy and comedy both fell through the hole. So did optimism and pessimism. And rebellion and reaction.

DAVID. I like you when you declaim, Dick. It's so seldom you open your mouth at all.

DICK. (*Ironically.*) My musical voice! Shut your eyes and listen, but don't trouble about the sense.

DAVID. No, I'm listening, I swear. Tell me more about the bottom of things. (*Grins.*)

DICK. I can't put it more clearly. If I try to define it in religious terms or social terms or philosophical terms or æsthetic terms or any other terms, it's not the whole truth.

DAVID. When did it fall out, then? In the War?

DICK. No, the War came later. The War was a diversion, to distract public attention from the all-important loss. The War is always made to account for every remarkable change in human affairs that has happened since the true catastrophe. The pretence is that the War was only a temporary morbidity, and that these changes are morbid hang-overs from war and so only temporary too. Well—reckoning back I should say that the bottom fell out of things suddenly, early one Sunday morning, towards the end of . . . (*Reckons to himself, but does not end the sentence.*) The crash was so terrific that nobody heard it—but it sent everyone mad all the same.

DAVID. And the War was part of the madness, I suppose?

DICK. Yes. First there was a shocked pause—two years; then. . . . Wait a second, I'll show you.

Exit (right); returns with a revolver. DAVID *does not look round; he is lighting his pipe.* DICK *standing close behind his chair looks out of the window, smiles ironically, takes careful aim and fires at something in the garden. Then quickly moves away out of view.*

DAVID (*jumps up, pauses a moment speechless with shock, then picks up a heavy agate paper-weight from the table, and is about to throw it, shouting*): Damn and blast your soul—take that!

DICK (*stands with his revolver pointed*). Quiet, David.

Put that down. Sorry, and all that. I was only showing you.

(DAVID *sullenly puts back the paper-weight.*)

There was this sudden unexpected terrific crash. . . . And what did people do? What you've just done. Paused for a moment and then went mad. (*He watches something out of the window and smiles.*) Made as loud a noise as they could to relieve their feelings. That's what the war was — the loudest noise humanly possible, a counter-noise to the noise the bottom made falling out of things.

DAVID. Damn and blast you, Dick, for your fancies. You know what my nerves are like since then. By the way, that wasn't a live cartridge, was it?

DICK. Yes, it was. I always keep a loaded revolver in the drawer of my work-table upstairs.

DAVID. My God, you gave me a fright. Dick dear, you really are absolutely wanton sometimes. (*Seizes him by the shoulders and looks at him, but does not meet his eye.*)

DICK. That's all right. Have a whiskey and soda. I'll get you one.

Goes away and gets it. Returns without revolver.

DAVID. What's the idea of the loaded revolver? (*Drinks.*)

DICK. It's like the human skull, or the coffin, that holy men in the middle-ages used to keep about the place to remind them of death. I had that Webley in France — do you remember coming with me when I bought it at that Ordnance Depôt at Havre in 1917?

DAVID. Yes, that's right. By the way (excuse me talk-

ing about those days), how often did you use it in the trenches — not counting rat-shooting?

DICK. Four times. Once to kill a pack-mule, wounded in the belly — guts hanging out — once in that raid near Bouchavesnes to plug a German — it took the top of his head off — once at Bullecourt — you weren't with us then — on a man of my own company — 91 Evans his name was — when he wouldn't get out of the trench to attack. And once on myself the same night when I came back alone and found 91 Evans' corpse grinning at me with a bloody mouth, the only other man in the trench. A shell burst just as I pulled the trigger and it spoilt my aim. The bullet glanced off. Here's the scar. It gave me the devil of a headache — knocked me out for a couple of hours.

DAVID. You never told me that before, Dick. (*Laughs nervously.*) I'd never have forgiven you if you'd killed yourself. Dick, dear, I don't like your *memento mori* Webley. I wish it were a nice harmless skull; wouldn't that do as well? I'll buy you one.

DICK. No, not nearly as well. This thing reminds me not only that death must eventually come, but that I can fix whatever date suits me.

DAVID. What did you aim at just now? A tree?

DICK. No, I've no spite against trees.

DAVID. Just at nothing? Dick, you're mad.

DICK. Well, whatever I am, don't blame it on the War.

Enter CECIL TOMPION, *from left. A young-looking man of fifty-two, dressed like a country gentleman, unpleasant voice, decisive gestures, florid complexion. He is breathing heavily.*

TOMPION. Here, you fellows. Let's have a whiskey too. (*Helps himself.*) Do you know what's just happened? Someone's tried to kill me.

DAVID. You don't mean it! (*Steals a look at* DICK, *who is quite impassive.*)

TOMPION. Didn't you hear the shot? It must have come from the garden wall. It must have been fired quite close to this window.

DICK. We thought it was a tyre-burst.

TOMPION (*sniffs*). I can smell the smoke here: it must have drifted in. . . . I was out there among the roses, and whoever it was fired two shots. The first whistled past my cheek——

DICK. Sure it was meant for you, father?

TOMPION. Meant for me? The next one took these gardening-scissors clean out of my hand. (*Shows them.*) Lucky I was holding them loosely. Then he yelled out, 'Take that, blast you,' and disappeared. I rushed round to the garden gate and into the road to collar him. But he was gone.

DICK. Let's see the scissors. Pretty bit of shooting, David, wasn't it, even with the top of the wall for a rest? Yes. (*Meditatively.*) You *did* say Pritchard had been practising, and I wouldn't believe you. I apologise.

TOMPION. Who? What? Not Richard Pritchard?

DICK. Didn't the voice sound familiar?

DAVID. Yes, I was telling Dick about it only this morning. It appears that ever since you were made a Companion of Honour, Pritchard has been eating his heart out in jealousy.

DICK. The poor fellow isn't even a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature yet.

TOMPION. Well, after all, he can hardly expect that sort of thing. He never had more than an elementary-school education.

DAVID. Someone told me that he'd bought a service-revolver and a few cartridges and that he'd pinned up your photograph from the *Sketch* on the top landing of the house where he's living and was using it as a target. But, of course, we thought it was only symbolic.

DICK. I must say, I couldn't believe it. The idea of anyone being jealous of. . . .

DAVID. I didn't want to worry you, unnecessarily. Did it sound like Pritchard's voice ?

TOMPION. I couldn't swear to it; it was distorted with anger.

DAVID. Pritchard's a simple fellow, as you know. He's got the delusion that he's the only poet living who's really good : he can't bear to hear you praised everywhere. But I don't think he tried to kill you. He reads *Wild West* stories. There's a hero called Ace Bradley, a gunman, who always shoots the revolver out of the sheriff's hand instead of killing him. Pritchard's playing Ace Bradley. Now he's shot the scissors out of your hands he'll be satisfied. By jove, Mr. Tompion, you had guts to run after him!

TOMPION. A fellow who was coward enough to shoot at me, an unarmed man, from cover, would never have had the courage to face me if I came after him in the open. He'd have tossed the gun away and legged it. Just like a Welshman!

DICK. What are you going to do about it? Shall I ring the police for you?

TOMPION. (*who has been drinking and is feeling better*). No, no! I don't want Pritchard locked up. I wouldn't bring a charge against a brother-poet. He's quite good in his simple way. Heaven knows there are few enough of us good poets writing to-day. We ought to stick together. No, I'm going straight to his place—where is it?—West Streatham, isn't it?—and make him give me his gun for safe keeping.

DAVID. Well, Mr. Tompion, I wouldn't do that, quite.

TOMPION. And why on earth not? Do you think I'm frightened of *that* little Welsh rabbit?

DAVID. It occurred to me that you'd be taking away his self-respect if you tried to take his gun and then he'd really try to kill you.

DICK. At present he's feeling all warm and golden inside. He's saying to himself (*imitates Welsh accent*). 'Duw! Duw! By Christian Damn I gave that bloody swine a proper fright, whateffer. Companion of Honour Tompion! Companion of the bloody Back House!' And then he'll laugh, 'O dear me, to goodness. I'll never forget that look of absolute bloody terror on his great face, when I shotted those scissors from his hand. O, Deoul, it was a dramatic situation, indeed!' Seriously, Father, I think David's right. Leave the poor nit-wit to enjoy his triumph.

TOMPION. Well. . . . Perhaps you fellows are right. . . . So you advise me to do nothing?

DAVID. If you don't mind me making the suggestion,

the best thing that you can do is to be a good Christian. Heap coals of fire on his head. You think he's a good poet. Write and tell him so. Or congratulate him on his new book. It's announced for to-day.

TOMPION. Well, perhaps there's something in that. If he's suffered from jealousy of my success I suppose I'm responsible in a sense. That new review *Saturday Morning*—by the way I've a short story in it, might amuse you boys—has asked me to do reviews for it—of any book that interests me. Yes, I'll ring them up now and get them to send it me. Pritchard's not a bad poet, though a bit over-ingenuous. You know, he started as an errand-boy in a Carnarvon drapery-shop; that's really greatly to his credit.

(*Exit, saying as he goes.*)

Don't tell anyone about this business, you fellows. Nobody seems to have heard the shots but ourselves.

DAVID. Dick, tell me. Did you fire at your father on purpose?

DICK. No, at the scissors. Why did he say *two* shots? Just to make it more exciting, I suppose.

DAVID. Good Lord! You didn't really! But you're no Ace Bradley yourself. I remember in 1917 when you were passing your young-officer's revolver test at the Depôt—I came down to laugh at you—the Regimental Sergeant-Major yelled out, 'O Mr. Tompion, Mr. Tompion, cease fire, Mr. Tompion. It's too dangerous. I'll give you a possible, if you'll only cease fire, Mr. Tompion.'

DICK. Yes, I was nervous then. It was a Test. And then you sniggering behind me and the Sergeant-Major

confusing me with his instructions; and a borrowed revolver. Of *course* my wrist wobbled and I sprayed the countryside in general. This was different. A snap-shot —my own choice of target—my own revolver—no one watching—not a moment to consider whether it was possible to miss. Instinctive shots never do miss, anyhow, if you know the weapon. It's one of the laws of Nature.

DAVID. Dick, I give you up. Suppose your father had suddenly moved or something had distracted your aim? Suppose you'd killed him?

DICK. Cut out the supposes. Or else put in a few more. Suppose that I loved him so dearly that I'd have been afraid of killing him. Or suppose I detested him so utterly that I'd have been afraid of missing him (but as you know I don't allow myself to have any feelings for him one way or the other). Or suppose even that the bottom had never dropped out of things—suppose it were still possible to have moral scruples about letting off fire-arms in a gentleman's residence.

DAVID. Damn that! Now you've got me mixed up in the Pritchard story, what's the next move? Are you going to let him believe in it?

DICK. You helped it along nicely, thank you, David. Yes, why not? It's a dramatic story. My father loves to find himself in dramatic situations. I'm going to improve on it, as a matter of fact. This is going to be an interesting and instructive round-game for any number of players.

DAVID. I'm not playing.

DICK. We'll see.

DAVID. Well, I might as well know, anyhow, what the rules are.

DICK. They'll be improvised as the game goes on. It's a sort of musical chairs without the music or the chairs—a romping elimination of the unfit.

DAVID. What instead of chairs, then?

DICK. My Webley, chiefly.

DAVID. If you fire off that damned thing again I'll ring up Scotland Yard and have you removed to Broadmoor.

DICK. *I'm* not going to use it. On the contrary, I'm resigning my title to it and passing it round.

DAVID. I don't understand you.

DICK. Passing it round, putting it in circulation as everyone's *memento mori*; then watch how soon things will start shaping.

DAVID. Why do you want things to shape?

DICK. I believe in signs. That shot—I fired it off without any malice aforethought——

DAVID. In sheer wantonness——

DICK. By sudden inspiration—it was certainly a sign. There's a staleness in the air around here. Can't you feel it? There's nothing like a revolver to clear the air.

DAVID. Which is it to be: farce or tragedy?

DICK. That distinction isn't relevant any longer: as I explained. If you *must* have a label, call it a Post-Catastrophic comedy.

DAVID. I've a good mind to tell your father the whole story.

DICK. He'd never allow you in the house again if he knew you'd been laughing at him.

DAVID. Dick, you're about the most dangerous person I know. You're a constant misery to me.

DICK. And you're a constant pain in my belly.

CURTAIN

Scene 2

The same, eight days later. DOROTHY TOMPION *and* CHARLOTTE ARDEN. *Dorothy is twenty-seven, a woman doctor just beginning to practise. She is small and dark-haired like her brother Dick, with a dark tailor-made dress. Her feelings are much more to the surface than Dick's. She is slim, conventional, and good-looking. Charlotte, the same sort of age, is fair but not blonde. Dressed in a summer frock. Has a particularly attractive voice, and is a much more sophisticated person than Dorothy; whom she treats with great affection.*

Charlotte is reading 'Saturday Morning,' standing, at the magazine table. Dorothy is sitting in the chair where David sat (in Scene I).

CHARLOTTE (*to herself*). Dick's right. He's getting really worse than ever.

DOROTHY. What did you say?

CHARLOTTE. Nothing. Only that this new paper's a dud. (*Throws it away.*)

DOROTHY. Charlotte, come and sit down. . . . I want to tell you something, and I don't know just where to begin.

CHARLOTTE (*in a stage whisper*). 'Let me guess!' Oh, Dorothy, I must tell you about 'Let me guess!' It's Dick's joke: about a dreadful old don at Oxford who's ninety-something years old, and professor of geology. He has a delusion that he's an embodiment of perpetual youth; so he's always mad keen on protecting the undergraduates against being bored by the other dons. 'Old fossils' he calls them, even when they happen to be fifty years younger than himself. A horrible aged playfulness: his chief joy is outliving his contemporaries. When someone dies and they come to him with solemn faces and say: 'Tertiary Granite, old fellow, we have bad news for you,' his face always lights up. He says in a fiendish whisper . . . 'Let me guess!'

DOROTHY. Well?

CHARLOTTE. 'Let me guess!' Who's the man? Why do you hesitate? Aren't you sure he's in love with you? (*Sits down.*)

DOROTHY. Well, it *is* about a man I'm in love with. You've guessed that far. Guess again.

CHARLOTTE. Anyhow, it's David Casselis.

DOROTHY. Charlotte, how on earth did you guess that? How could you have known? I didn't till this morning myself.

CHARLOTTE. Easy. You see, I was nearly in love with him myself last year. He's very easy to be in love with. Everyone *is*, almost. That's the trouble with men of David's er — temperament — psychology — whatever the polite word is. Women get interested in the sort of men who give them absolutely no encouragement; it's such a relief from the usual sex-bears.

DOROTHY. But aren't you in love with him now?

CHARLOTTE (*draws her finger across her throat*). Drop dead!

DOROTHY. Why, bother you? What was wrong?

CHARLOTTE. Nothing. I thought it would be a good plan to fall in love with him, but. . . . Look here, I'll tell you why you're in love with him. That's much more interesting.

DOROTHY. No, I'll tell *you*. First of all——

CHARLOTTE. First of all he's so charmingly dishonest and he never looks at you when he speaks. Shy as a little boy.

DOROTHY. Yes, that's right. I met him first at Lady Anstruther's dance—Dick made him come—and you know how well he dances—not brilliantly or showily, but so considerately. He was very nervous afterwards sitting out with me. We had a coffee each, and he was gently, gently, very gently breaking an Apostle spoon in his fingers, to see if it wouldn't. But it did; and he blushed all over his ears and head; and then he jumped up, spilling his coffee, and muttered something about apologising to Lady Anstruther. He went off with the pieces; and I followed a little way behind to hear what excuses he'd make; and guess what he did!

CHARLOTTE. Of course the poor creature funked it. What did he do with the pieces?

DOROTHY. He looked carefully round to make sure no one was watching and then he hid them in a hyacinth pot. Bless his naughty little ways.

CHARLOTTE. Do you know why he was nervous with you?

DOROTHY. I couldn't imagine. After all, I was the sister of his best friend.

CHARLOTTE. Well, I'll tell you. He's nervous of all women except the ones he doesn't suspect of being in love with him—the comfortable old women with black satin fronts and good-looking grown-up sons. He warms up to *them*, all right—spends hours with them at the tea-table, actually writes them long newsy letters. All men of David's—what *is* the word?—of David's persuasion, are like that. I hadn't known at first that David was one of them—he's the athletic type and usually they're either slobby or dainty—but as soon as I saw him with old Bugle, our housekeeper—she was telling him about her son killed in the war and David was nearly crying with sympathy—I suddenly understood. That was when I tried to fall in love with him. You see, I'm of the complimentary persuasion. (Well, you know *that*, at least.) It seemed a good idea. David is always at his ease with me, because he feels that in me; he feels that I'm not a danger to him.

DOROTHY. Really, Charlotte, I can't understand a word of all this. What persuasion?

CHARLOTTE. Don't you know, really?

DOROTHY. Stop teasing me.

CHARLOTTE. A woman doctor, too? Didn't they tell you about all that at the Hospital?

DOROTHY. Maybe I'm awfully stupid but it sounds absolute nonsense to me. You tried to fall in love with

him because he was sympathetic with Mrs. Bugle about her son being killed. (That's as far as I can get.) But then you couldn't keep it up?

CHARLOTTE. Well, if you want it plainly: he's the sort of man who can never be in love with any girl.

DOROTHY. That's exactly where you're wrong. He's just asked me to marry him.

CHARLOTTE (*utterly surprised*). Well, I go to Chicago! Protestations of love and all that? Honest?

DOROTHY. In writing. In his neat, regular, pretty, slightly backwardly sloped, dear handwriting.

CHARLOTTE. Too shy to ask you by word of mouth . . . or kiss of mouth?

DOROTHY. Charlotte, you're jealous, you poor darling.

CHARLOTTE (*laughs*). No, dear. I admit I'm confused, though. I can't make it out. But you're in love with him; he's apparently in love with you. It seems good enough. All the same, it's a shock. I didn't think he had it in him to fall in love with a girl.

DOROTHY. Well, what else do you think he could possibly fall in love with? Old ladies with black satin fronts? Really, Charlotte, you're quite insane. Is this your fantastic Freudian stuff about maternal fixations? No, thank goodness, we didn't have any nonsense of that sort taught us in our psychology course. . . . It's this, Charlotte. Do you think that it's right for me to marry when I'm a doctor? Suppose I have children: is it fair to them? Bringing children up properly is a whole-time job; so is the practice that I'm building up. It looks as though I'll have to choose between them.

CHARLOTTE. Do you mean you're worrying about *that*? Well, why *have* children?

DOROTHY. What do you mean?

CHARLOTTE. Well, what do *you* mean? They're damned little nuisances anyhow.

DOROTHY. I mean: one can't help it usually when one's married, can one?

CHARLOTTE. Dick *was* right. My goodness! My supreme and ineffable goodness!

DOROTHY. Right about what?

CHARLOTTE. I told him it was impossible for anyone to go through a seven-years' medical course—gynæcology and all—and remain ignorant of any of the more important bad jokes of nature.

DOROTHY. Well?

CHARLOTTE. All right: I'll tell you what he told me. About a month ago you told him a story about a woman who'd had an operation when you were house-surgeon. Her husband. . . . (*Pauses, slightly embarrassed.*)

DOROTHY. Yes, go on.

CHARLOTTE. Her husband asked you whether it would be all right for him to sleep with her now, and you said 'yes, if you're careful not to bump against her in the dark.' And then he looked embarrassed and puzzled. And you asked him if he snored. And he said *Snore?* in a withering tone.

DOROTHY. It didn't wither me. Yes, it *was* funny, wasn't it?

CHARLOTTE. Well, *I* go to . . to—the ancient University of Upsala. What a triumph of dissociation! (*Laughs.*)

DOROTHY. What's dissociation?

CHARLOTTE. Not being able to understand Connection. Or put obvious things together.

DOROTHY (*angry*). This conversation is like a nightmare. (*Shakes* CHARLOTTE, *who is convulsed with laughter.*) Charlotte, dear, you've not spoken two words of sense this afternoon. Tell me seriously. What ought I to do?

CHARLOTTE (*laughing still*). Honestly, Dorothy, I haven't . . . the . . . very . . . slightest idea. I'm like you at the beginning of the conversation. 'I don't know just where to begin.'

Enter TOMPION (*left*).

TOMPION. Hullo, Dorothy. (*Kisses her.*) Hullo, Charlotte; where's your little sister Jane? (DOROTHY *is polite to her father, but no more.* CHARLOTTE *plainly dislikes him.*)

CHARLOTTE. In the garden with Dick and David.

TOMPION (*opens the window and shouts*). Jane, David, Dick! Something to show you!

Enter JANE, DICK, DAVID (*left*). *Jane is twenty-two or so, dresses rather wildly but not sluttishly; fair, determined-looking without* CHARLOTTE'S *unhappy look. Looks like a girl who has just left Oxford without troubling much about a degree.*

JANE. Hullo, Mr. Tompion.

TOMPION. Too old to kiss me, Jane?

JANE. Yes. No offence, please.

TOMPION. None at all. Look here, boys and girls:

look at this treasure. A messenger has just brought it. Sorry that I can't give you the thrill of opening the seals. Note: postmark, West Streatham. No other clue to the sender except that the brown-paper has been used for wrapping books. Publisher's name: Glenway and Good. Guess! Now, Dorothy, my dear, you guess first.

DOROTHY. I don't know, father. How should I? An infernal machine sent you by a group of your admirers?

TOMPION. Pretty good, Dorothy. Really, that's pretty good. Nobody'll get nearer than that.

DICK. I bet I will. Glenway and Good are Pritchard's publishers. West Streatham is where he lives. I guess a revolver.

TOMPION. Absolutely right, Dick. But you had a clue. (*Opens the parcel.*)

JANE. What a funny present. Is it loaded?

TOMPION. Of course not—yes, by Jove, it is! Here, hands off! . . . However, the safety-catch seems to be on.

JANE. I've never handled a loaded revolver before. Do let me! *Please*, Mr. Tompion.

TOMPION. Well, youth and beauty will be served. All right. Be very careful not to point it at anyone.

JANE (*takes it and examines it curiously*). Which is the safety-catch? (*She is standing* (*left*) *away from the others, with her back to them.* TOMPION *is at her side.*)

TOMPION. Here at the side. You press it. Now it's ready to fire.

JANE. Is it *really*? Oh, what a perfect feeling. I could

kill anyone I liked now. Couldn't I, Charlotte? And there are so many people who ought to be killed. (*She has slowly turned round with the revolver raised and pointed.*) Is the trigger easy to pull?

(CHARLOTTE *throws her hands above her head. So does* DAVID. TOMPION *drops flat.* DOROTHY *springs in front of* DAVID. *A pause.*)

Oh, isn't everyone terrified of me? Dorothy heroic but terrified. The others just plain terrified. Oh, no, all except Dick. What are you doing, Dick?

DICK. Half a moment. I'm winding the clock. (*Compares it with his watch.*) It's just this moment stopped. Fright, I suppose.

JANE (*repentant*). Oh, Dick, was it awful of me?

DICK. Awful? Hell no! Absolutely the right spirit. Let's have a feel of it myself. (*Comes and looks at it.*) It looks a nice weapon. I wonder how many people it's shot? It's an army revolver.

JANE (*holding the revolver pointed at* DICK). I wonder how many more it's going to shoot?

DICK. People oughtn't to be so frightened, ought they? There are so many other simple ways of getting killed in a house. Falling downstairs, for instance. Thank you. (*Takes it.*) The old-fashioned convention was to handle a revolver butt first. But that way's just as good these days.

Everyone recovers and begins to scold JANE *all at once.*

CHARLOTTE. Stupid little idiot!

DOROTHY. Jane, *really*!

TOMPION. 'Pon my soul, Jane, I must say!

DAVID. Jane, you ought to be spanked.

JANE. Sorry, everyone. It seemed alive, eager to go off. It twisted round like that by itself. Funny feeling.

TOMPION. That's the second time I've been near death from that gun.

DOROTHY. Once is enough for me. Put the hateful thing away, Dick. At once! At once! (*Stamps.*)

DICK. It's safe enough with me. Safety catch up. There. Or look, I'll unload it. This is how you unload it, girls. Press here and bend. (*Breaks it open.*) Here are the cartridges. (*Ejects them.*) They go in again quite easily. (*Reloads.*) And then you click it back. (*Shuts the revolver.*) Simple, isn't it? (*Puts it away on a top shelf behind the bust of Milton.*) Now everyone knows how to use it. It's quite safe there. Nobody ever dusts the top of bookcases.

JANE. Oh, Mr. Tompion, I really am sorry. Don't be too angry with me. It was only a joke. Of course, I wouldn't *really* have pulled the trigger. Do tell me: who sent it you?

TOMPION. Ought I to tell the story, you fellows?

DICK. Now that Pritchard's name's been mentioned you might as well.

TOMPION. Well, gather round. Eight days ago, the Saturday before last, I was in the garden over there (*leans out of the window and points*) cutting off the dead rose-heads. David and Dick were in here. Suddenly I heard a well-known voice shout at me over the wall. 'Take that, damn you, Tompion!' Then he let fly with this revolver. The first shots came pretty near. You fel-

lows say you only heard two? That was because he fired so fast. The third took the gardening scissors clean out of my hand. (*Opens the table drawer and shows them.*) Look! That's true, you fellows, isn't it?

DOROTHY. O, father, what did you do?

TOMPION. I ran out at once to collar him.

(DAVID *makes a pantomime caricature for* DICK, *indicating that* TOMPION *was very frightened and ran for cover.* DICK *does the same.* JANE *notices this and smiles.*)

But the street was empty. I am . . . informed—that he'd been having target-practice with a portrait of mine for weeks past. The fact is, he's insanely jealous of my work.

DAVID (*to* DOROTHY). Dick and I advised your father to take no notice. But he improved on our advice. He magnanimously put that review of Pritchard's new poems —what are they called? *The Gardener's Lad*?—into *Saturday Morning*.

CHARLOTTE. Yes, I read it. It was very affable.

DICK. And now apparently Pritchard has repented and done the decent thing by sending the gun back.

DAVID. You really should give it up to the police, Mr. Tompion.

JANE. No, no. Don't do that. It's such a useful thing to have about the house. Burglars. Give it to me, if you don't want it. I'll take it home with pleasure.

DICK. I agree with Jane. Don't give it up. The police would probably ask awkward questions.

JANE. And anyhow, why should they have it? Imagine giving them a valuable present like that.

TOMPION. Well. . . . I think I'll keep it as a trophy. I'll hang it here by my table.

DICK. Yes, good! And you can fire it off at the end of every ten thousand words.

CHARLOTTE. Are you going to send any message of acknowledgment to Pritchard?

TOMPION. I hadn't thought of it. A neatly worded telegram of thanks?

CHARLOTTE. No, he'd not appreciate it. Send him just those gardening scissors. He'd like them as a trophy.

JANE. Clever Charlotte. Yes, Mr. Tompion, do send them! Look, I'll wrap them for you. You needn't write anything at all. Here's paper and string all ready.

DICK. Just enclose your card.

TOMPION. Very well; it's an amusing exchange. (*Produces his card. They all help to tie the parcel, laughing.*)

CURTAIN

Scene 3

In the rough at a neighbouring links, the following day. DAVID *and* CHARLOTTE *looking for a ball. They are carrying their own clubs.* CHARLOTTE *kicks the ball up from a tussock.* DAVID'S *back is turned. She picks it up furtively, drops it into her bag and goes on looking.*

DAVID (*testily*). What possessed you to slice your drive into a wilderness like this, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE. Just dishonesty, learned from watching you. I always get fed up after about six holes. I want to talk. (*Signals to golfers behind to pass through.*)

DAVID. This is no place to talk. You can't sit out at golf.

CHARLOTTE (*sits down*). Cigarette?

DAVID. Thanks. I can't escape, I see.

CHARLOTTE. Anyhow, I've found the ball and picked it up. And you didn't drive at all. So why shouldn't we stop for a bit?

DAVID. There's nothing to talk about. You know there's nothing.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, *isn't* there? Look here, I'll say it out at once. Why did you write and ask Dorothy to marry you?

DAVID (*gets up, takes a ball and club and answers her in a defiant schoolboy way, between putts, without looking at her*). What do you mean, *Why?* Anybody else want to marry me? You, for instance?

CHARLOTTE. You can't play it that way, Dishonest David. I know all about you from Dick. I guessed and asked him wasn't it so ; and he said yes, you *were* that way.

DAVID. I don't know what you're getting at. Let's play more golf. I'll allow you to drop your ball without forfeit.

CHARLOTTE. You're a pretty poor liar, David. I mean,

well, that you have no romantic feelings for people of the opposite sex. That's right?

(*He does not answer: takes out a driver and practises a swing*).

Good Heavens, it's nothing to be ashamed of.

DAVID (*mutters*). No . . . it's the way one's born.

CHARLOTTE. Then why are you going to marry Dorothy?

DAVID. What business is it of yours?

CHARLOTTE. David, behave. I'm not bullying you. Really. I'm just asking for information. You see, I'm that way myself. I'm sort of involved.

DAVID (*puts down his club*). By jove, are you, Charlotte? I rather suspected you were.

CHARLOTTE. You said just now 'it's the way one's born.' Do you believe that?

DAVID. I meant that it's no crime—just a misfortune. You do agree, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE. What *I* mean is, do you think that it's something one's born with or something that happens to one, say, at school? Something that can be got over?

DAVID. Well, of course, *that's* the important question. Probably there are two types. The congenital and the acquired. That's what's usually said. But I don't know.

CHARLOTTE. We neither of us look congenitals, do we? (*They laugh.*)

DAVID. I've always wanted to talk with a woman who was like that.

CHARLOTTE. Well, I'll talk. I'll tell you my story if you like.

DAVID. Yes, please do.

CHARLOTTE. You know that at all girls' schools there's that sort of thing always going on. Everyone has crushes on the elder girls or the younger mistresses — you know — giving flowers and being jealous and keeping diaries about how often one saw the adored one and writing sentimental poetry. But it ends as soon as one leaves school and begins to meet men; or even before. Only the mistresses — you'd laugh if they knew the common-room life of a big girls' school — they keep it up. There's a sort of competition as to which mistress can have the most girls romantic about her — a jealous counting of bouquets. It grows on them and becomes an obsession; they see no men, and don't want to marry and lose their jobs. Of course it's all *silly*, with a semi-religious side to it.

DAVID. You mean nothing — er — serious ever happens?

CHARLOTTE. Practically never. Girls aren't pigs like little boys; they're just kittenish little beasts. And no mistress would think of. . . . I mean if you read the police court news you find scores of cases of boys' schoolmasters behaving like swine. Little pigs end as swine. Kittenish little beasts just end as old cats. Anyhow, in girls' schools everyone sneaks, so it couldn't be kept a secret if it did.

DAVID. I've always wondered about girls' schools.

CHARLOTTE. Well, I'll tell you what happened at mine. Mine was just the exception. It was a big expensive one and supposed to be run on exactly the system of Eton. That's a good joke to play on girls, isn't it?

DAVID. Yes, I should have thought one Eton was enough glory for England.

CHARLOTTE. I had a hopeless crush on an elder girl. She was a member of our imitation 'Pop.' She was Captain of the Boats, too. (Yes, we even had that.) I was sixteen and she was eighteen. Oh, she was lovely. She was Irish. We used to exchange notes whenever we got a chance. I was in another house from her, but I saw her a lot—I coxed the school boat. Well, the notes got more and more—of course, absolutely what's called *innocent*—but more and more extravagant. She used to begin hers 'My darling little wife,' and I began mine, 'My darling husband.' Silly! Are you bored?

DAVID (*who has his putter out again*). No, indeed not.

CHARLOTTE. She only kissed me once, almost by mistake. Well, one day—I got expelled.

DAVID. You! What on earth for?

CHARLOTTE. Because *she* got expelled. For something else. I mean she was *really* like that. I didn't know she was. They found my letters to her, so naturally they suspected 'the worst' (*makes a face*).

DAVID. Wouldn't they take your denials?

CHARLOTTE. I didn't know what all the fuss was about. I admitted that she'd kissed me and said that I liked it, and that it was none of their business anyway and that I didn't give a damn for them and their carpet-slipper spies and that I was glad to be expelled with Bridget. They didn't like that.

DAVID. So that's the story. And I suppose since that

shock you've stayed temperamentally where it hit you. Arrested emotional development?

CHARLOTTE. Maybe it's that. Maybe it isn't. That's what I'm anxious to know. What was your story?

DAVID. There wasn't any shock. The thing was more progressive with me. I was at — well, a rotten public school where the fees were £100 a term and nearly everyone was a pig. Except me. I was pious, not to say priggish: all the time I was at school. I was very good-looking as a kid and the bloods were buzzing round all the time. I was frightened by the business at first: after a while I liked the sense of power it gave me. I . . . are you bored?

CHARLOTTE. No, go on.

DAVID. Well, I got sort of minxish and flirtatious like a Society belle. I kept my innocence — but only technically. Do you despise me, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE. I do rather, but go on.

DAVID. Well, nothing happened except that I eventually became a blood myself and had romantic feelings for the smaller boys; but somehow I never became a pig.

CHARLOTTE. And you went to Cambridge. Why didn't you recover there?

DAVID. I got in with a set of æsthetes. We were all very handsome fellows. Amateur theatricals, music, poetry. They called us the Swans. I was up for two years and then. . . .

CHARLOTTE. Well, then the war. Surely in the war. . . .?

DAVID. That's another part of life that isn't generally

known. Do you know how a platoon of men will absolutely worship a good-looking gallant young officer? If he's a bit shy of them and decent to them they get a crush on him. He's a being apart; an officer's uniform is most attractive compared with the rough shapeless private's uniform. He becomes a sort of military queen-bee.

CHARLOTTE. And his drilling them encourages the feeling?

DAVID (*nods*). Of course, they don't realise exactly what's happening, neither does he; but it's a very very strong romantic link. That's why I had the best platoon and then the best company in the battalion. My men adored me and were showing off all the time before the other companies. They didn't bring me flowers. They killed Germans for me instead and drilled like angels. It was an intoxication for them; and for me. And then——

CHARLOTTE. Then you had romantic feelings for Dick.

DAVID. He's never encouraged them. Of course he's the best friend I ever had, and I wouldn't have that spoiled.

CHARLOTTE. Tell me, David, have you ever tried giving way to your . . . to your obsession?

DAVID (*carefully putting down a stymie and playing it with a mashie, answers, not looking at her*). No, of course not. What about you?

CHARLOTTE (*staring gloomily at her nails*). No, of course not!

DAVID. Anyhow, it was all so unsatisfactory that I got desperate and decided to fall in love with a girl.

CHARLOTTE. And you chose Dorothy because she's so like Dick. And because being a doctor she has a superficial hospital-hardness and anti-sentimentality. And because she's rather boyish-looking. Right?

DAVID. But, most important, she's very much in love with me. That makes it easier. She confessed it to Dick. I really believe I'm going to fall in love with her.

CHARLOTTE. Is it fair on her? Suppose, when it comes to the point, you get a wave of disgust for her?

DAVID. Dishonest David is clever enough to hide it if he does. (*Sits down.*)

CHARLOTTE. Look here, David. I'll be quite frank. I have just the same suppressed romantic feelings for Dorothy as you have for Dick.

DAVID. You're jealous of *me*? (*Laughs mirthlessly.*)

CHARLOTTE. I am. My stupid Dorothy got it all wrong: she thought I was jealous of *her*. But I'll tell you something else to square things between us. Your clever Dick's in love with me.

DAVID. O hell, is he? Of course, I knew you were together a lot.

CHARLOTTE. You're jealous of me? (*Laughs mirthlessly too.*)

DAVID. Yes. I mean, no! I'll try not to be if you won't be jealous of me. Are you going to marry him?

CHARLOTTE. When he asks me.

DAVID. He hasn't yet?

CHARLOTTE. He hasn't yet, because I haven't given him the chance. But I know just what he feels for me.

(Dick's been a damned good friend to me.) If I give him the chance he will. Of course it's easier for a woman to pretend to have feelings than for a man. The man is expected to do the crude work of loving. The woman's part is more subtle. So the experiment. . . .

DAVID (*angry, jumping up*). I refuse to have David made the subject of your experiments. He's too good for that. It's a dirty trick.

CHARLOTTE (*angry, jumping up too*). And what about your trick on Dorothy? Look here, you keep away from Dorothy, and I'll keep away from Dick.

DAVID (*scowling*). I'm not quitting now. Besides—(*recovers himself*) come back about the dirty trick. You admire Dick, and Dorothy's in love with me. Why should we deny them what they want of us? Besides, I'm hoping it may end happily anyhow.

CHARLOTTE. *I'm* all right with Dick. It's you I'm not sure about. Besides, Dick and I aren't fools. Dorothy is. She's a qualified doctor but she's amazingly ignorant of what a girl of twenty-seven should know. From your point of view, of course, that's a gain. It gives you time to adjust. But I wish—oh, David, I wish you wouldn't marry her. I can't bear to think of her marriage being a ghastly failure. Really it's you and I who ought to get married. Wouldn't it be more honest to try our experiments on each other? You know, I tried to make you fall in love with me once. Shall we?

DAVID. Too cold-blooded. Besides, they'd never forgive us. Besides, I can be—I can try to be in love with Dorothy because she's Dick's sister. And the same with

you and Dick, because of Dorothy. Our only hope of becoming normal members of Society is to bridge over the difficulty in this way.

CHARLOTTE. Poor David! Well, good luck!

DAVID. And good luck, poor Charlotte! (*They shake hands.*)

CHARLOTTE. No more jealousies? (*They both sit down.*)

DAVID. But it's a rotten thing to be like we are, isn't it?

CHARLOTTE. Yes . . . it's humiliating. I can't even work up that sentimental salt-of-the-earth feeling that you men-victims work up for yourselves; as if this misfortune were something to be secretly proud about.

DAVID. Well, after all, Charlotte, there was Socrates and Cæsar and Shakespeare and Michelangelo. On your side, too, there's Sappho.

CHARLOTTE. Damn that woman! Bridget used to talk about Sappho like that. (*Very bitterly.*) David, sometimes I wish I were just an ordinary old-fashioned prostitute with an honest passion for ordinary low ugly knobbly hairy men. (If you *knew* how the thought of men sickens me!) God, I would give my soul to be in love with Dick in the way I am with Dorothy. You see, David, Dorothy's a fool. That's my tragedy. And I have to kid myself all the time that she isn't. Sweet as sugar, but oh, such an almighty fool! Dick's got a mind. He's real.

DAVID. It's just the other way round with me. If Dick were an ordinary, light-hearted, stupid creature like Dorothy, it would be easier for me. I like to boss people I'm in love with, to have them look up to me. But Dick

knows I'm a fool and bosses me instead. I don't like it. He overreached himself the other day at the time of that . . . that revolver business. I decided to switch over from him to Dorothy. Dorothy's perfect for me.

CHARLOTTE. You mean she would be, if she wasn't a woman. O David! Let's stop talking. If we talk any more we'll change our minds again. There's nobody at the tee. Let's drop balls and start from here again. All square, aren't we?

DAVID. Now for two good shots out of the rough.

They drop balls and address them.

CURTAIN

ACT II

Scene I

An oyster-bar in the West End, the following night. DAVID *and* 'ANOTHER' *are sitting at a table together talking in undertones. A waiter comes up from behind* DAVID *who is seated facing the audience and gives a wink and vulgar grimace at* 'ANOTHER,' *whose back is turned to the audience and who never shows his face.* 'ANOTHER' *is a youth of seventeen or eighteen dressed somewhat effeminately.*

DAVID (*to* WAITER). It *is* the first of September, isn't it?

WAITER. Yes, sir, September One. And a very good crop at Whitstable this year. Nice and fat. How many dozen?

DAVID. I'll have one to start with. What about you?

ANOTHER. Another, please, mister.

DAVID. Two dozen then. I'll have a pint of Black Velvet. What about you?

ANOTHER. Another, please, mister.

DAVID. One for me and another for Another. Also brown bread and butter.

WAITER. And I'm another. (*Again grimaces at* ANOTHER.) Very good, sir.

Exit WAITER.

DAVID. Look here, 'Another,' I oughtn't to be seen in here with you. I've a number of respectable friends. The theatre crowds are just coming out. If anyone comes in

here and I kick you, clear out. I'll meet you across the street as soon as I can get away.

ANOTHER. What about me oysters?

DAVID. You can take them with you in your handkerchief and swallow them outside.

(WAITER *returns with oysters, Black Velvet, etc.*)

Hell! Here comes someone already. (*Sees him in the mirror.*)

ANOTHER. Me oysters! Quick!

The WAITER *holds them out of reach.* 'ANOTHER' *grabs at the tray.* WAITER *pushes him away with his foot.*

WAITER. Nah then, Greedy!

DAVID. Get out; at once!

'ANOTHER,' *whose face can still not be seen, makes a gesture of despair and bolts out through the door at* LEFT BACK. *From* RIGHT BACK DICK *slowly enters, smiling.*

DICK. Hul*lo*! David. Surprise. Who was that friend of yours who bolted just now?

DAVID. Oh! casual acquaintance. Odd fellow. Painter, you know. Invited me to have oysters with him and as soon as they arrived dashed off and left me to eat them alone.

The WAITER *has been setting the table. Smiles.*

DICK. Shy, probably? Saw me coming?

DAVID. Artistic temperament. It doesn't matter. You can manage his helping, can't you?

DICK. Sure. (*Takes* 'ANOTHER'S' *chair, but shifts it round a bit so that he can be seen and heard by the audience.*)

(*A long pause while they eat.*)

By the way, David, Charlotte and I have come to a sort of understanding.

DAVID. I thought something like that was imminent. Feeling happy, oh, so happy?

DICK. Same as usual. Don't be vulgar: I'm not getting married.

DAVID. Not getting married?

DICK. You didn't really think I meant that?

DAVID. Why not? You're in love with Charlotte, aren't you?

DICK. 'In love with.' All right; if you like to put it that way.

DAVID. But . . . er . . . you're not proposing to make her your mistress, are you?

DICK. Mistress! What a magnificent antique vocabulary you've got! People who are 'in love with' each other, couple and probably live together. That's all there is to it these days. I didn't ask Charlotte to *marry* me. I simply told her what I felt about her.

DAVID. What's wrong with *mistress*?

DICK. It's a dated word; it goes with 'protector.' It belongs to the period before the catastrophe.

DAVID. What catastrophe?

DICK. When the bottom dropped out of things. I told you about that the other day.

DAVID. Oh, that again.

DICK. Oh, that all the time. You seem to think that it's a joke of mine.

DAVID (*waves impatiently*). Doesn't Charlotte want a wedding ceremony?

DICK. Charlotte would say that it didn't matter one way or the other; she might be ready to go through a ceremony for convenience, that's all. She's rather wanting in that sort of personal morality. But she knows my feelings well enough not to raise the question with me.

DAVID. Personal morality? Do you mean that you have a moral scruple against marrying? What is it? Don't you want to feel bound to her?

DICK. You'll ask me next if my intentions are strictly honourable. Really, David, you're not my sort.

DAVID. Well, what's wrong with marriage as a social convenience? I'm not talking about its sanctity. That's for people like your sister Dorothy. She's the sort of person who'd insist on a church ceremony.

DICK. Once its sanctity goes, I don't see what you mean by its social convenience. Can't you understand that since the catastrophe there's not only no more sanctity, there's no more society either; not *really*, I mean.

DAVID. O, that's metaphysics. Be practical for once. Think of hotels. You've got to sign the hotel register. 'Miss Charlotte Arden, Mr. Richard Tompion'—that would look a bit awkward, wouldn't it?

DICK. Hotel-keepers don't believe in the sanctity of marriage any more than you do. They only politely

pretend to believe that their clients believe in marriage. I've never met a hotel porter to whom you couldn't say, 'I'm the Emperor Solomon and this is the Queen of Sheba. Please preserve our incognito in the register.' In most hotels you don't even have to take that trouble. What other social convenience besides hotels?

DAVID. Well, there's the possibility of children.

DICK. My good David, what legal or social disqualification do bastards have nowadays?

DAVID. Well, there's the name, for a start.

DICK. A child can be registered in any name it chooses. And?

DAVID. And, and. . . . I don't know. . . . I had some idea that illegitimacy disqualified you from voting . . . doesn't it?

DICK (*bursts out laughing*). And from sitting in the House of Lords. Go on, David, you're in form.

DAVID (*half smiling, half annoyed*). Well, anyhow, if you live openly with someone who isn't your wife, you can't carry on a lot of the professions. Doctoring — soldiering — politics——

DICK. Or even the Church. The four prime pre-catastrophic professions — the four that abandoned themselves to an orgy of usefulness during the war to prove that they still had firm ground under their feet. These are debating-society arguments. Got any real ones?

DAVID. Well, if you have a mistress. . . .

DICK. Mistress?

DAVID. I don't see why I shouldn't use the word. If you

have a mistress, everyone immediately starts thinking of it as a purely sex-relation and it must be damned embarrassing. If you're married, once the honeymoon's over, everyone assumes that all the romance is evaporated and it's a sort of business partnership.

DICK. Marriage as an enemy of romance. True.

DAVID. Anyway, Dick. The fact is that there's no sensible argument in favour of marriage, except that it's a universal habit and the only people who live together for long *without* a ceremony are the people who can't be married because one or both are already married to someone else. There *is* a sort of unanimity about marriage—a popular sanctity, if not a divine one.

DICK. What puzzles me, David, is why *you*, of all people, are defending marriage.

DAVID. Well, Dick—er—the fact is, I'm going to marry Dorothy.

DICK. *You*, David? Not really! Sudden metabolism? I can't believe it.

DAVID. Fact, I assure you. Ask Dorothy.

DICK. But wasn't that fellow I saw you with just now. . . .

DAVID. By jove, Dick. There's your father with a woman. They've seen us. Now they're slinking out again!

DICK. What! Protector and mistress. (I've heard of her, but never seen her.) We mustn't let them escape.

Jumps up and after a while returns with TOMPION *and* ELIZABETTA BEHRENS, *a blonde. They are*

both in evening dress and TOMPION *slightly*, MRS. BEHRENS *considerably, drunk.* TOMPION *is on the defensive and ashamed at first.* MRS. BEHRENS *is expansive and thoroughly at her ease.*

TOMPION (*blustering a little*). Why, fellows, I didn't recognise you. Let me introduce Mrs. Behrens. Mrs. Behrens, my younger son, Dick — my friend Casselis — David Casselis the architect.

DICK *shakes hands non-committedly*, DAVID *nervously.*

DAVID. I'm going to find the waiter and get him to bring more oysters. (*Takes his hat off the peg and goes out.*)

DICK. I thought you were in Manchester addressing the Students' Fellowship?

They sit down, DICK *in* DAVID'S *chair facing audience, the other two left and right of him.*

TOMPION. That's right. I *was* supposed to be. But they — at the last moment they wired, postponing it. And I accidentally ran into Elizabetta Behrens — you remember she was a friend of your mother's, Dick. She had room for me in a box at His Majesty's, so I joined her party. Just come out.

DICK. Funny I didn't see you. I was in the stalls.

MRS. BEHRENS. I felt a bit faint half-way through the first scene and Cecil took me out. We had a few drinks at my place. Then we got hungry and came along here. So you're Cecil's son. Funny to think of Cecil with a grown-up son. The one who writes? Let me see: novels, isn't it?

DICK. No. (*Calmly.*)

MRS. BEHRENS. Plays?

DICK. No. (*Calmly.*)

MRS. BEHRENS. Oh, then short stories: of course.

DICK. No. (*Same tone.*)

MRS. BEHRENS. Dick-may-I-call-you-Dick, you're very secretive. What *do* you write, then?

DICK. O, writings!

MRS. BEHRENS. Then I'm dying of curiosity to read your writings. Cecil, why haven't you ever shown me any?

DICK. My father's more or less illiterate. But they are all exposed for public sale. I can't prevent you from buying them if you must.

MRS. BEHRENS. Cecil, your Dick is very amusing.

TOMPION. He gets a bit of a bore after a time. He's typical of his generation. No manners. No respect. Stupendous conceit. Dick, where's David?

DICK. Slunk off. He had a pal waiting outside.

TOMPION. Never even sent the waiter. David's another beauty. Hi, waiter!

MRS. BEHRENS. I like Dick's directness. I'm going to ask him questions. I'm going to learn things.

WAITER *comes up.*

TOMPION. A good champagne and two dozen oysters!

WAITER. Very good, sir.

Exit.

MRS. BEHRENS (*leaning over to Dick and clasping his hands, which he does not withdraw*). Dick, surely you wouldn't hate me, for your mother's sake?

DICK. You have just been introduced to me as her friend; and I don't remember her ever mentioning you to me.

TOMPION. Fact is, Dick, there was a misunderstanding. Your mother was a very jealous woman; got hold of the wrong end of the stick.

DICK. No, Mrs. Behrens, I dislike you for direct personal reasons; I don't carry on family feuds.

MRS. BEHRENS. Oh, this is fine. What reasons? I implore you to tell me. Don't you like my face?

DICK (*looks at her critically, disengaging his hands*). No. Neither your face, your voice, the way you dress, the scent you use, or the questions you ask. I just *don't like* you.

MRS. BEHRENS (*not at all hurt*). Cecil, I'm beginning to believe that your younger son's a genius.

DICK. God forbid. *That* one's a genius (*nodding at* TOMPION).

WAITER *enters with oysters and champagne: serves and then exit.*

MRS. BEHRENS (*claps her hands laughing*). Cecil, I'm convinced of it now. You'll have to look to your laurels. Your son Dick's a great man. Do you know, Dick, genius attracts me in a very peculiar way, particularly when I'm slightly drunk. I always fall in love with men of geniuses. It's like some women go all goosey when they see naval uniform. Can't explain it. Just nature working. If I read your writings and find you're a real genius I'll fall in love with you too; however much you hate me. (*Nestles close to him. He does not repulse her.*) Recite me one of your writings. Your best!

TOMPION. Elizabetta, you mustn't behave like that. We're known here.

DICK. Oh, *she's* all right. Have another drink, Elizabetta. (*Pours it out.*) Are you in love with dear old Cecil?

MRS. BEHRENS. Then you *do* love me a little? You're jealous.

TOMPION. Elizabetta. Behave. I insist. Anyhow there's nothing for you there. This generation's no good, no good at all. Dick's typical of it. They don't possess any deep emotions. They don't know what Passion is when they love any more than they know what Style is when they write. They're soft. They don't hunt hard, drink hard, love hard, work hard, do anything hard.

MRS. BEHRENS. O Cecil, that's very unfair. They fought *very, very* hard in the War!

TOMPION. They think that gives 'em a right to sag for the rest of their lives. No sense of drama, no religious enthusiasm, no strong religious doubts even. Just nothing. And nine out of ten are perverts. You're one, aren't you, Dick?

DICK (*casually*). Don't know. Never tried. (*To* MRS. BEHRENS.) How long and hard have you loved your honest hard-riding old Cecil? Did you know him when he wore staff-uniform and went to lecture in America on British War Poets?

MRS. BEHRENS. No, that was before my time. Did he look handsome?

DICK. Kingly. He wore his spurs upside-down, half the time.

MRS. BEHRENS. We've loved hard for just seven years,

haven't we, dearest? (*Shifts round to* TOMPION.) That's why Cecil's always so broke. I'm fearfully extravagant.

DICK. I've always wondered where the money went. But you must have been a great comfort to him.

MRS. BEHRENS. Irreplaceably. He puts me in all his books. Can't you recognise me, now you've met me, as the leading female in his *Sussex Cycle*? I'm in every book, slightly disguised, of course. I'm Lavinia in the first, Lavinia's daughter in the second, Phœbe, a little, in the third. Esmeralda. . . .

DICK. I've never read *Sussex Cycle*. Is it good?

MRS. BEHRENS. Dick, it's wonderful. Do you honestly mean you haven't? What a feast in store for you. Come round to my flat—number 5, Iddesleigh Gardens, N.W.3—and I'll show you the best passages. I have them marked. Cecil and I often gloat over them together, don't we, my dear?

(DICK *notes the address.*)

You *will* come, won't you?

DICK. I can't imagine any more amusing way of spending a wet afternoon.

TOMPION. Dick!

DICK. Sir?

TOMPION (*very angry*). Dick, I'm going to raise your allowance by a hundred pounds.

DICK. On what grounds? Don't let me rob Mrs. Behrens.

TOMPION. Because I'm sorry for you. You're pitiful: you can't write, not for little apples you can't. You can't

even produce your bad stuff in quantity. And apparently it's your only livelihood.

DICK. True. But why an extra hundred?

TOMPION. With money you can afford to travel. Go to Paris. Go to Australia. Go to Los Angeles. Go any damned where you please. Buy a bit of life there. Broaden your horizon. Come back a man.

DICK. Father, what's a hundred? Make it another hundred and fifty. You can't buy much for a hundred, these days. Can you spare it, though? Can he spare it really, Elizabetta?

MRS. BEHRENS. He's an old miser. He got two thousand advance for his last novel. He must have pots put away somewhere. Dick, if you promise to come and read *Sussex Cycle* with me one day soon, I'll see you get it. You won't hate me then, will you?

DICK. Fine. Another drink. O, by the way, Elizabetta . . . I have a serious question to ask you . . . do you believe in the popular sanctity of marriage? David Casselis does.

They all drink, MRS. BEHRENS *and* DICK *laughing together*, TOMPION *drunkenly aloof.*

CURTAIN

SCENE 2

The Library at the Tompions', DICK *and* CHARLOTTE: DICK *sitting, right, in an arm-chair.* CHARLOTTE *standing,*

left, at the magazine table, turning over the leaves, with her back to him.

DICK. I've been telling David about you and me and he actually asked when we were going to get married.

CHARLOTTE. And?

DICK. Well, of course, I laughed. But what could you have said to have given him that idea?

CHARLOTTE (*turns round*). I only mentioned *marriage* to David — because — sort of habit I suppose — I know you'd never get *married* to anyone — I just used it loosely for a permanent togetherness of you and me — and you're not angry?

(DICK *is silent.*)

You *do* want me, Dick, don't you? For keeps?

DICK *does not answer. He gets up from the chair, puts his cigarette in an ash tray, comes very slowly towards her. She looks nervous. He embraces her. After a while she wriggles free.*

DICK (*smiles*). All the same, darling, you don't seem to want *me* much.

CHARLOTTE. I've had no practice. Never been embraced by a man before.

DICK. Well, the idea is to be responsive, not just complaisant. Let's try again.

She assents, not eagerly.

CHARLOTTE. Sorry I can't do better than that, Dick. The fact is, it's an off day for me. I ate something at lunch. . . .

DICK. Poor sweetheart. Never mind, there's all the time there is. Going to be all right?

CHARLOTTE. I think so, Dick. Just a bit sick, that's all.

DICK. Come and sit here with me, anyway, and talk?

CHARLOTTE. I'd rather not move, thanks. Sorry to spoil the first moment of romance, Dick. You know I love you, don't you?

DICK. Romance be buttered! Charlotte, dearest, how old are you?

CHARLOTTE. Twenty-seven, and never kissed a man in my life before. Unenterprising, isn't it?

DICK. O, look here! Speaking of kissing men, Charlotte; what's David marrying Dorothy for? Is he really changed and all right?

CHARLOTTE. First tell me, do you love me?

(DICK *nods, smiling.*)

Will you *swear* you won't tell David or Dorothy I told you what I'm going to tell you now?

DICK. Swear!

CHARLOTTE. Well, *he's just trying to get over his trouble*—that's all.

DICK. You mean he's not really in love with her?

CHARLOTTE. He likes her. She's in love with him. He wants her to normalise him; he's ashamed to go on any more as he is.

DICK. Who told you?

CHARLOTTE. He did himself. . . . Do you really love me, Dick?

(*He nods again.*)

Swear?

DICK. Swear! Why do you want me to go on saying so? What's the doubt about?

CHARLOTTE. I might as well tell you at once and get it over. I'm like David myself, only the opposite.

DICK. You mean you used to be till you decided you were in love with me?

(*She does not answer, but smiles.*)

Oh! (*A long pause while he looks searchingly at her.*) Now I'm going to ask you questions. Do you really love me, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE (*in a faint voice*). I . . . I love you very much, Dick . . . better than any man I know. . . . I admire you. . . . You've been damned good with me.

DICK. To hell with all that. Do you *love* me? Physically, for instance?

CHARLOTTE (*still faint*). I like you to be in love with me, Dick. I want you to be.

DICK (*calmly*). In fact, it comes in the end to this, you're playing the same game with me as David is with Dorothy? That so?

(*She does not answer.*)

Admit it. It's important.

CHARLOTTE. No, it's not the same, quite. I'm a woman, David's a man. And you said you—you *swore* you loved me.

DICK. Did I?

CHARLOTTE. Just now, Dick; you know you did. I'm offering myself to you, that's all.

She stands up and holds out her arms for him. He rises and comes towards her, attracted against his will.

Suddenly he stops, recovers, retrieves his cigarette from the ash-tray, relights it, sits down.

DICK. I don't accept presents from strangers.

CHARLOTTE. That's too strong, Dick. You can't make a stranger of me.

Pause.

DICK. I want to get this straight, Charlotte. Didn't you like me kissing you at all? Not *at all*?

CHARLOTTE. I liked to feel that you were enjoying yourself.

DICK. Not good enough. It disgusted you.

CHARLOTTE. The disgust will wear off.

DICK. I'm not going to give it a chance. It takes two to make a sex-life. You'd never be able to do more than politely switch your mind off when I was kissing you. Dentist-chair technique!

CHARLOTTE. But, Dick, if you *really* loved me, you'd help me over my obsession, gradually.

DICK. Never mind whether I really love you or not. What does 'love' mean, anyway? It's a dead-world idea like 'marriage.' All I know is that I'm not going to *live* with you, just because you need me for medical reasons; and under a pretence of love.

CHARLOTTE. I'm beautiful. You want me. I won't bind you in any way. In this dead world why not take gladly what you can get free. Please, Dick! (*Comes closer.*)

DICK. No. What one gets free isn't worth anything.

CHARLOTTE. You can't help yourself.

DICK. *Can't* I?

(*She embraces him.*)

(*He is apparently unmoved.*) Not good enough. Sorry, Charlotte. Run away and practise some more.

CHARLOTTE. You mean that you really don't want me after all?

DICK. Dear Charlotte. I'll be like a sister to you. I always have been, haven't I?

CHARLOTTE. I'm not accustomed to be refused things.

DICK. Well, you can't force me to live with you, can you?

CHARLOTTE. *Can't* I? Look here, Dick. The offer of me, unconditional me, is open till midnight to-night. Then it's withdrawn.

DICK. Well?

CHARLOTTE. If you don't take me, I'll give myself to the first man who'll have me.

DICK. O well! If just *any* man will do to help you over your obsession (or whatever you call it) and that's all you care about—go off now and get just anyone. And thank you for your frankness. Don't trouble to wait for midnight, if you're in a hurry.

CHARLOTTE. Please, Dick. Don't get angry. Be sensible. I like you very, very much. I love everything you do. I honestly believe that once I got accustomed to the strangeness of it I could fall in love with you.

DICK. Talk doesn't help. Cut it out.

CHARLOTTE. Please, Dick, think it over. I really mean that about the offer. It's still open—till midnight.

DICK. Oh, I hope you pick a beauty! Why the Devil aren't you content to remain as God made you?

(*A knock.*)

O, come in!

Enter BUTLER.

BUTLER. Excuse me, Mr. Dick. There's a short sturdy gentleman at the front door; wearing ready-made clothing. He's highly excited and wishes to see Mr. Tompion. I have assured him that the master is out. But he refuses to credit me.

DICK. Didn't he give his name?

BUTLER. No, Mr. Dick; he says that I am not to mind what his name is.

DICK. Then please inform him that his name is Mr. Richard Pritchard, and that Mr. Richard Tompion is in and would be glad to see him.

BUTLER. Very good, Mr. Dick.

Exit.

CHARLOTTE. Damn the man coming now. Dick, darling. . . . What does he want?

DICK. O, he wants to assault my father. I don't blame him.

A knock.

Enter BUTLER.

BUTLER. Mr. Richard Pritchard!

Enter PRITCHARD, *a little dark, nervous man, in ready-made clothes, a bowler hat held awkwardly, a flower in his button-hole, a sensitive face. Welsh accent.*

DICK. Hullo, Pritchard. I've been wanting to meet

you. I'm Richard Tompion. This is Miss Charlotte Arden.

PRITCHARD *shakes hands. His manner is a mixture of anger and nervous apology. He evidently counted on seeing* TOMPION *and had a speech rehearsed.*

PRITCHARD. Where's Cecil Tompion? I want that rotten fellow. He's grossly insulted me.

DICK. Heavens, he's insulted you too? That's very bad. (*To* CHARLOTTE.) The way that these so-called famous men-of-letters carry on is absolutely disgraceful, Charlotte, isn't it? Of course, my father's far the worst of them all. (*To* PRITCHARD.) How did he insult you, Pritchard?

PRITCHARD (*produces a newspaper parcel, tied with red wool, from his pocket, and unwraps the gardening-scissors*). Well, now what do you think of that? He sent me that, with his card.

DICK. How's that an insult?

PRITCHARD. A pair of broken bloody garden-scissors!

DICK. My poor father's losing his wits. Why garden scissors? It seems rather a poor joke to me. Doesn't it to you, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE. I don't see it myself.

PRITCHARD. He wrote a long critique of my new book in some foolish new paper. A mock-praising review — I'm not the man to be gulled by his fine phrases. He was laughing at me. Serious, he was!

CHARLOTTE. Yes, I read the review. It was stinking.

PRITCHARD (*eagerly*). Yes, ma'am. An utterly stinking critique. All about my artless genius and child-like

innocence of phrase — me, who's ninety-nine times more of a man and a poet than he.

DICK. Oh, at least ninety-nine times. Practically cent per cent, in fact.

PRITCHARD. Aye, and he had the confounded impudence to hope that, in future, I would prune more in my longer pieces.

DICK. That was a nasty one: coming from him!

PRITCHARD. Aye, and the book was called *The Gardener's Boy*, and see! he sends me these bloody broken gardening-scissors as a symbol.

DICK. It's a dirty shame. Isn't it, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE. The man ought to be beaten up. If only Mr. Pritchard knew the way he's treated *us*! (*Produces a handkerchief.*)

DICK (*glances puzzled at her, but decides to play the part she has assigned him*). Simply refused to let us marry. Threatened to cut off my allowance if I persisted.

CHARLOTTE. He wants to marry me himself.

PRITCHARD. Well, now, would you believe it!

CHARLOTTE (*into her handkerchief*). And I'll probably let him marry me if I can't marry Dick; I don't care what happens.

PRITCHARD. It's a damned shame!

DICK. Yes, and it's a great disappointment to me. But of course one can't oppose one's father, can one? Especially when one's dependent on him for one's income.

CHARLOTTE. And Dick does love me so.

DICK. And what's worse, all the time he keeps a mis-

tress. You've probably seen her about with him. A beautiful woman with golden hair. Her name's Elizabetta Behrens. A great admirer of your work by the way, Pritchard. I believe she hates him, really. I know she's afraid of him. He plans to marry Miss Arden and keep her on as a side line.

PRITCHARD. The man's a most unmitigated scoundrel. I don't pretend to be a very moral man. But at least I don't go masquerading as a Companion of bloody Honour. (*Passionately.*) Deoul, man! If I had a revolver, now, I'd shoot him like a rat, I would.

DICK. Good for you, Sir! There's a revolver hanging up by that table. Would you like it? (*To* CHARLOTTE.) You don't think Mr. Pritchard would really shoot him, Charlotte, do you?

CHARLOTTE. O yes, he would, I think.

(*To* PRITCHARD). But wouldn't it be much more fun just to frighten him?

(PRITCHARD *has got the revolver down and is gingerly examining it.*)

Shoot the pipe out of his mouth. Put a hole through his silk hat. Give him a real good fright. It's what he needs. It's what he needs badly.

PRITCHARD. Is this his own weapon?

DICK. He claims it: that's the table where he writes.

PRITCHARD (*grins*). Well, it's mine now. I'll swap it with him, for these broken garden-scissors. How do you use it? I've never before had a revolver in my hand in my life, no!

DICK. It's loaded. There's the safety catch. When you

press that it's ready to fire. You just pull the trigger. A steady squeezing motion of thumb and forefinger.

PRITCHARD (*excitedly*). Where'll I find him?

DICK. Probably with his mistress, in a flat at, let me see. (*Consults his notebook.*) 5 Iddesleigh Gardens, N.W.3. You'll like Elizabetta Behrens; she's very beautiful and very cultivated. She knows some of your poems by heart. She recited them to me. Of course, she doesn't tell my father about this. I don't know what would happen if she did.

PRITCHARD. I can trust you both not to say a word?

CHARLOTTE. Not a word. And we'll swear the butler to silence too.

PRITCHARD. Most likely it will suffice the circumstances just to frighten him. But I'll keep this revolver handy, all the same.

DICK. Good luck in any case. And remember, don't say a word yourself about having been here.

PRITCHARD. Trust a Welshman! Good-bye, Richard Tompion. And good-bye, Miss Charlotte. (*Puts on his hat to take it off to her.*)

Exit.

DICK. Oh, so you've chosen my father, have you? Yes, he'll *have* you all right. But why *him*? Surely the world's full enough of men? Why not Pritchard? He'd be better by a long sight. Why not Denman? He's a good solid fellow.

CHARLOTTE (*pale with anger*). Why? Because your father's the man you dislike most in the world. Because

when I marry him you'll always see him about with me. Because I *hate* you!

DICK. Charlotte, dear, don't be hysterical. What's this all about, anyway? Why do you *want* a man? Except as a friend, like me. You ought to make a virtue of your natural continence.

CHARLOTTE. That's my business. And I won't have you insulting me any more. You're so ghastly utterly selfish that you won't even accept my sacrifice. I was a fool to tell you about it. I was too decent.

DICK. Oh! sacrifice!

CHARLOTTE. Yes, of letting you enjoy me when I know you want me.

DICK. Well, I'll tell you this: I'm so selfish that it wouldn't be any enjoyment to me to enjoy you or anyone else who didn't enjoy me while I was enjoying them. That's why I don't deal with prostitutes. So you're going to *marry* my father, are you? Red carpet, bridal veil and bouquet, ring, organ, church register, cake, weeping relatives. Why *marry* him? If you want to make me jealous why not just flirt with him? You'd get a rise out of me on that even.

CHARLOTTE. Not final enough. Imagine me as Mrs. Cecil Tompion. Won't you like that?

DICK (*wavering*). I am absolutely, and finally, and irrevocably *damned* if I'm going to be blackmailed into giving in to you.

CHARLOTTE (*pleading*). Dick, dear. Only just a trial. To see if it's possible. A week-end somewhere?

DICK (*recovers*). Charlotte, dear. Do you like me very, very much?

CHARLOTTE (*half crying*). O, Dick, I've just said I hate you.

DICK. Meaning that you want very, very much to love me, but you just can't.

CHARLOTTE. Meaning. . . . O, Dick. . . . How I wish I were an ordinary, ordinary woman!

DICK. But you're not. Face it!

CHARLOTTE. You could help me to be.

DICK. I don't believe it. If you can't help shuddering when I kiss you now, it will be worse later. Let's cut out the physical side altogether. I'll live with you without that, if you like. We've been good friends.

CHARLOTTE (*angry again*). No. If you won't budge, I won't budge. It was a joke about your father, but, by God! I'll do it all the same.

DICK. It seems a very unnecessarily disgusting way of committing suicide. Why not try the gas-oven instead?

CHARLOTTE. Because I *hate* you. I hate you worse than ever. That's my last word. But I said till midnight, so I'll still give you till then.

DICK (*angry at last*). Good-bye, Charlotte. This is the end. Be a great man's wife and go to hell. It won't hurt me.

CURTAIN.

SCENE 3

The tennis court at the TOMPIONS' *the following afternoon. Tables and chairs* (*central*), *a yew hedge* (*right*). *Part of the*

court can be seen on the left of the stage with TOMPION *crouched up to the net, facing* DOROTHY. TOMPION'S *partner,* CHARLOTTE, *serves;* DOROTHY *mishits.*

TOMPION. Oh, well *served*, partner. Magnificent. Game and—Want another, you girls? I told you Charlotte and I were invincible, didn't I?

DOROTHY. You're always such a bad loser, father, that I'm glad when you occasionally win. Aren't *you* glad, Jane?

JANE. So long as I hit the ball hard once or twice I don't mind either way.

They move off the court (right). TOMPION *actively leaps the net.*

TOMPION. You're as bad as young Dick; he even refuses to play with me now because I go all out to win. I can't understand you young people. You don't take even *games* seriously. Let's have the lemonade. I'm hot. And Jane, help me pull this table into the shade.

They move the table, with the lemonade glasses on it, forward. They sit around on wicker chairs, TOMPION *putting on his sweater, the girls powdering their faces.*

DOROTHY. Father did all the work. You were playing very wildly.

CHARLOTTE. Was I? I'm not surprised. You see, I've a secret. Since this morning.

DOROTHY. What is it, dear? Something to make you happy?

CHARLOTTE. I could hardly hold my racquet straight.

JANE. That's the first time I've heard you admit you were happy, for about ten years.

CHARLOTTE. Yes, that's right. You see, I'm going to get married at last.

DOROTHY. Married! You, too, Charlotte! You're a dear sweet copy-cat! Oh, Charlotte, I *am* so pleased. (*Kisses her.*) Father!

(TOMPION *pretends to be busy lacing his shoes.*)

Did you hear that?

TOMPION. Hear what, my dear?

DOROTHY. Charlotte's going to marry Dick!

TOMPION *grins.*

JANE. How do you know it's Dick?

DOROTHY. Who else could it be? As a matter of fact David told me yesterday it was imminent.

CHARLOTTE. Your David's a half-wit. He always gets things wrong. Me marry *Dick*! An utterly selfish person like him!

JANE. Dick selfish! You're crazy, Charlotte. How was Dick ever selfish? He's the best you'll ever get anyway, and I know he's wanted you for months. Who on earth else? You don't know any men besides him, anyway. Not well enough to marry.

TOMPION. Charlotte, my dear, this situation is getting a bit—well—embarrassing. The fact is, Jane, that Charlotte, I trust wisely, prefers maturity to callow youth.

DOROTHY. What on earth do you mean?

CHARLOTTE. I'm going to marry your father, Dorothy.

DOROTHY. Don't be utterly ridiculous. It *is* Dick, really, isn't it?

CHARLOTTE. It's no joke.

TOMPION. No! honour bright, Dorothy. Charlotte's consented, after a hurricane wooing, to marry me. How do you like your new step-mother, Dorothy?

DOROTHY. Sorry, but I simply can't believe it. It's . . . it's like a sum that you *know* the answer to is wrong. You can't find the mistake, but you *know* it's wrong. Charlotte, Dick's been in love with you—anyone could see it—since the spring. And now you suddenly go and marry father instead!

CHARLOTTE. Dick ought to have asked me if he felt like that. He never did. And now your father and I have suddenly found that we're in love with each other. You can't expect me to waste my pity on Dick, can you?

DOROTHY. Oh, Charlotte, that *was* horrid of me. I *do* apologise. I was just confused. Sorry, father. It was so funny to think of the generations getting mixed, that's all.

JANE (*impulsively*). Yes, almost indecent. (*In confusion*) I mean, I've always thought of Dick and Charlotte together, somehow, these last six months. Of course . . . Mr. Tompion's very charming: and still jumping tennis nets.

TOMPION. Thank you, Jane, for championing my cause. Yes, there's life in the old bard yet.

DOROTHY. Does Dick know?

CHARLOTTE. Not definitely. But I hinted yesterday

that I was in love with your father, so it won't come as a surprise.

DOROTHY. Then he *did* ask you to marry him?

CHARLOTTE. No, not a word about marriage. Truthfully.

DOROTHY (*brightly*). Well, I'm going to cheer him up by telling him that he needn't be disappointed. You're not much of a loss, are you, darling? (*Laughs affectionately.*)

TOMPION (*with triumphant indulgence*). Poor old Poet Dick. But he'll get over it. I always seem to be saying, 'Poor old Dick' these days. If it's not about his absurd ways of writing poetry or his absurd critical views, it's about his gloomy old-old-mannish outlook on life. I can forgive Charlotte for not wishing to tie up with a fellow who's really old and crabbed enough to be my grandfather. Support me, Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE. Why, of course, Mr. Tompion. I'm absolutely with you.

(TOMPION *interposes*—'Cecil!')

I'm weary to death of the so-called younger generation, Cecil. Especially the writers and their experimental tediousness. What does it all amount to? What has Dick to show?

JANE. Charlotte, you're a liar. You can't change your opinions as quickly as that. Only two days ago you told me that you thought Dick was writing in the only way that it was honest to write nowadays.

CHARLOTTE. Perhaps I did. I felt it my duty to stick up for my generation. But now that I've identified myself

with a really solid person like Cecil, that's quite unnecessary.

TOMPION. Charlotte's grown up at last, Jane. She sees reason. Two or three years more and so will you. It wasn't that Charlotte was taken in by Poet Dick's literary acrobatics. It was just rebelliousness against the old tried ways of writing and thinking and behaving? You'd have accepted almost any charlatanry that was in revolt, now wouldn't you? (*Tries to draw her on his knee. She stiffens, and with difficulty speaks naturally.*)

CHARLOTTE (*in a low voice*). No, Cecil, dear. Not in public, please!

DOROTHY. I think it's absolutely hateful the way that you two talk of Dick's work—at a time like this, too. I think you might at least leave *that* alone.

JANE. Good for you, Dorothy. I agree. Dick's a good poet, and not in the very least a charlatan. You've only got to *look* at Dick to see that. Of course, he's *difficult*; one can't read him lazily like one can Mr. . . . well—say Richard Pritchard's poetry. Obviously it's difficult to write, and so it's difficult to read.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, I agree Dick's *honest*. But what single poem of his will be found in a popular anthology a hundred years from now?

TOMPION. Oh, I don't know. (*Magnanimously.*) There was that very early poem he wrote before he turned Bolshie. It must be twelve years ago, now. The one about the . . . about fish wasn't it? I remember it had one or two striking lines in it for a boy of eighteen. That might survive. . . .

CHARLOTTE. But seriously, Jane, compared with Cecil's

work, what *are* his poems? Look at Cecil's bookshelf of solid brilliant work—thirty years of it—universally recognised as good. And set Dick's miserable sheaf of potty little limited editions against it. There's no real comparison, is there? After all, bulk counts.

She said this with a raise of voice at DICK, *whom the others have not noticed. He is dressed as if he had just got off his motor-bicycle; and is crossing the tennis-court. He looks haggard. He speaks jauntily.*

DICK. Did you say bulk or bunk? Or don't trouble to distinguish. Well, father, my sincerest congratulations.

TOMPION. How did you know?

DICK (*lightly*). I was trying to work this morning; your room is directly below mine, and the noise of love-making floated up. He *does* kiss noisily, Charlotte. You ought to break him of that.

CHARLOTTE *looks at him with hatred.*

TOMPION. No ill-feeling, Dick, my boy? You allowed me to steal a march on you, didn't you? Well, all's fair in love and war.

DICK. Yes, I heard that one. It was one of the bayonet-fighting gags taught at the P.T. School at Aldershot. It was called 'The well-known addagy,' and it introduced the butt-stroke. Congratulations, Charlotte. Has he given you a lovely ring? I bet he has. Diamonds and platinum? Let's see!

(CHARLOTTE *gets up and turns her back.*)

Oh, Charlotte, I *am* sorry. My tactless tongue again. Only an amethyst set in pearls. For shame!

DOROTHY (*impulsively*). O Dick, dear Dick. I *am* so sorry.

DICK. Yes, it *is* a little hard on her, isn't it? (*Kisses* DOROTHY.) Well, Dorothy, how's your David? (*Mock-earnestly.*) Are you *happy* together?

DOROTHY (*laughs*). Blissfully. He is so sweet to me.

DICK. Keep it up. (*Turns suddenly to* CHARLOTTE, *savagely.*) Are *you* happy, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE. Blissfully, blast you!

DICK. I hope it keeps fine for you. Are you happy, father?

TOMPION. Dick, old man, don't take it too hard. Shake hands!

DICK. Certainly. (*Shakes hands with both hands.*) Mine are smothered in motor-bike grease. I was just going to wash them. How are the 'cinders of middle age,' father? 'Fanned and about to burst into the hottest and most devouring flame of all?' I took Mrs. Behren's advice the other day and read your latest. I remembered that sentence. It's good, isn't it, Charlotte? Hot! Do you know Elizabetta Behrens, Dorothy? Friend of mother's, admirer of father's.

DOROTHY. Dick! really! I do think. . . . (*She glares at him.*)

DICK. A topical reference, though. I've just passed her on my motor-bike. She's in a taxi with a revolver, gunning for father.

JANE. Really, Dick? A revolver! Why?

DICK. Ask *him*! She's *his* playmate, not mine.

TOMPION. What fool's game is this, Dick? You didn't mention this engagement to her, did you?

DICK. Yes, casually. I thought she'd be pleased.

TOMPION. She's dangerous, a very dangerous woman. (*Looks round in alarm, rushes into the house.*)

JANE. Oh, I'm so excited. Do you think she's really going to use it?

DICK. Well, this looks like farce rather than tragedy. But of course, that revolver's awfully keen on going off. You noticed it yourself the other day.

JANE. But it's not the same one, is it?

DICK. Why, of course.

Re-enter TOMPION.

TOMPION. Dick, Dorothy, where's that revolver of Pritchard's? I thought it was hanging over my table.

JANE. O, Mr. Tompion, are you going to defend yourself. What fun!

DICK. I'm really awfully sorry, father, but Pritchard called yesterday, when you were out. He said he wanted it back, and Charlotte and I gave it to him. He was very quiet and decent and brought the gardening-scissors in exchange. We thought you wouldn't mind.

TOMPION. You gave it back to Pritchard? You young . . . blockhead!

JANE. Charlotte, what *is* all this? Who's this Mrs. Behrens?

TOMPION. Dick, tell Denman not to let *anyone* into the house on any pretext.

DICK. Certainly!

(*Enter* MRS. BEHRENS, *right, from behind yew-hedge.*)

O, hullo, Elizabetta. What have you got there? Did I leave the garden gate open? My shocking carelessness.

MRS. BEHRENS (*hysterically*). O, good afternoon, Dick. I've come to shoot your father.

Everyone retreats, leaving TOMPION *alone, covered by* MRS. BEHRENS' *revolver.*

TOMPION. Don't! Don't! (*Puts his hands up.*)

MRS. BEHRENS. Why not? Why shouldn't I? You double-crosser! Where's this Charlotte whom you're going to marry? Show me her.

TOMPION. Elizabetta. Let me explain. I've been unfair to you, Elizabetta. But put that gun down.

MRS. BEHRENS. Yes, Richard Pritchard told me a few things about you.

TOMPION (*playing for time*). Pritchard? I didn't know you knew him.

DICK. Elizabetta, come! Don't shoot dear daddy. You'd not leave me and Dorothy orphans!

JANE. No, please don't Mrs. Behrens, it's not kind.

MRS. BEHRENS (*laughs hysterically*). In half a minute I'm just going to *scatter* him.

DICK. And then we'll never really know how his unfinished novel was to have ended. It'll be another dreary *Mystery of Edwin Drood.* Don't do it, Elizabetta. Or find out about it, first.

MRS. BEHRENS. Damn his novel. He promised to marry me. . . . Speaking of the 'sanctity of marriage.'

DOROTHY (*coming forward angrily*). O, *did* he? He promised *me* that he would *never* marry you; after mother died he promised.

MRS. BEHRENS (*to* TOMPION). You dirty. . . . (*takes steady aim*).

(DICK *snatches revolver from her: it goes off in the air.*) Oh, it's missed!

DICK (*as if talking to a child*). Elizabetta, you might have been hanged for that. It was very imprudent of you. Now tell me, where did you get this gun? Tell me, or I'll call the police! Was it from Pritchard?

MRS. BEHRENS (*crying*). Yes, if you *must* know.

TOMPION. He sent you to murder me?

MRS. BEHRENS. No, he doesn't know I have it. I swear! I . . . I took it from the hip-pocket of his trousers early this morning when he was still asleep. He didn't notice.

DICK. You two are close friends then, already. That's fine. But in that case, Elizabetta, I think it was very ungenerous of you to grudge Cecil to Charlotte here; surely one genius at a time is enough?

MRS. BEHRENS. No, that's quite different. Marriage is quite another thing. Cecil promised to *marry* me.

DICK. Well, what about Pritchard? He's just the sort of man to do the right thing by you. And he's got lots of money put by. He spends very little on himself. He's saving up to marry, he told David, when he finds the right woman. He's a much greater genius than Cecil anyhow. And younger, and has a much nicer face. Ask Charlotte; she'll be the first to agree.

MRS. BEHRENS. Dick, you're a dear. I'm so hot-tempered. It was something about the feel of that gun, too. I hadn't any murderous feelings against Cecil at first, when you told me; but then I went to my room and happened to pick it up and it. . . .

DICK. That's all right, Elizabetta. I'll make everyone promise not to tell the police. You all promise, don't you? Yes, of course they do. Let bygones be bygones. Amen.

A blank pause.

MRS. BEHRENS. Good-bye, then, everyone. I mean everyone except you, Cecil: I hope *you* have a long, nasty life. (*He is silent; she turns to go.*) Oh, Dick, I am so, so grateful to you. (*Comes back and kisses him.*) Come and see us sometime, and we'll have the hell of a celebration. Pritchard thinks no end of your work, he says. He swears that you're the coming man. Isn't that nice of him? Says that you're worth ten of your father.

Exit.

TOMPION. Charlotte! Can you ever forgive me for this? The fact is, I didn't have time to explain. . . .

DICK (*interrupts*). *Do* forgive him, Charlotte. After all, previous affairs don't count in love, do they?

CHARLOTTE. *All right*, Dick. Well, this is absolutely the end of *you*.

DICK. The end of me? — Why?

CHARLOTTE (*in a fierce aside*). For insulting me, for trying to teach me things that I know already, for repeating my own sour jokes to me as if they were new ones

of your own. Do you think I have a scrap of respect left for you now?

DICK. I honestly don't care. If I have helped to reduce the situation to its lowest terms that's all to the good.

DOROTHY. Dick, Father, Charlotte, I don't know which of you all I hate most. You're just *beastly* to each other. (*Stamps.*) I think *you*, Dick—you're the nastiest. And Jane, you're a bloody-minded little monster. Give me that revolver. *I'm* going to look after it this time. I'm the only one of the whole lot who can be trusted with it.

DICK. Here you are, Dorothy. It's decent of you to take charge. They're dangerous things. I've always said there ought to be a law against revolvers.

DOROTHY (*takes it*). Oh, I'll be glad when I'm married to David and away from you all.

CURTAIN

ACT III

Scene I

Morning room of Dorothy *and* David's *new house on the edge of Hampstead Heath. View of the Heath through the window. Interior decorations are of the very advanced* 1912 *period. London Groupish pictures, negro and Chinese works of art, omega-workshop tables and painted chairs. It is January and there is a fire. Hyacinths in bowls.*

Dorothy *writing letters at a desk (right).*

Enter Dick *(left). He looks ill, but his voice is cheerful.*

dick. Well, Dorothy?

dorothy. Dick! Of all people. Dick! You didn't come to my wedding. Or Charlotte's wedding. Or write to me at Christmas. Where *have* you been? I haven't seen you for a moment since that terrible afternoon on the tennis-court. September, October, November, December, January. Nearly five months. Are you all right? You look rotten.

dick. Yes, I'm all right. I've been working, that's all. It always knocks me out. I've finished the thing now.

dorothy. Where have you been? Oh, I'm so glad it was only work. I thought you'd hated me for being so angry with you that day. Or perhaps that you didn't like my marrying David.

dick. *Were* you angry? I'd forgotten. I've been

nowhere particular since I cleared out from home. I've rooms not far off. (*Waves vaguely.*)

DOROTHY. Father tells me that you've not been drawing your allowance.

DICK. No; that's right. There's a point beyond which one can't carry a bad joke. I've been all right. I sold a lot of my books. And I'm all right for another few months; don't worry. If I want money, I'll ask you for some. Well, how are you?

DOROTHY. Still working. Do you like my new house?

DICK. I suppose it's all right. Modern but beautiful; and so on. Everything going well?

DOROTHY. My practice is increasing. David's work's fine.

DICK. Still blissfully happy?

DOROTHY. David's very, very sweet to me. Of course, he's terribly busy at present on the plans for the big church he's to build in Kent. In fact, he often goes to his office at night to work. He says that he can't think when all the office people are about. I want him to bring all the plans and things home to work here, but he says it's too much to cart about.

DICK. Still, Dorothy, you don't look properly *blissful.* Something's wrong. Tell me. Come on. Cough it up in little brother's hand.

DOROTHY. Oh, Dick, you're about the only person I could tell.

DICK. What is it?

DOROTHY. I'm shy about telling even you: well—it's this . . . David's not really right.

DICK. Not right? Isn't he well?

DOROTHY. He's well enough generally, but there's something . . . in our life together. . . . A nervous failure, probably, something to do with that wound of his. . . . He didn't realise about it before.

DICK (*whistles*). Oh, I *see*. That's damned bad luck, Dorothy. It makes a lot of difference to you?

DOROTHY. Well, you see, what's the use of marriage if you can't have children? It's what the priest reads out in the homily: 'Marriage is ordained for the procreation of children.'

DICK. Can't he be cured?

DOROTHY. Apparently not. I sent him to the best man in Harley Street, but David says he could give him no hope.

DICK. Are you sure that Dishonest David went?

DOROTHY. Oh, Dick, David isn't dishonest with *me*. His dishonesty is only shyness really.

DICK. Well, why not annul the marriage?

DOROTHY. Dick, how *could* you? I do hate you sometimes for the things you say. David's in love with me. He hates being away from me, he says, even when he's at the office.

DICK. Well, I suppose there's nothing to be done. Your profession's no loser, though.

DOROTHY. No, I work harder than ever now. I'm a children's specialist.

DICK. That helps?

DOROTHY. I don't know. It may be making things

rather worse for me. O, Dick, I must tell you. I'm so envious of women who are having babies. Especially Charlotte; you know we were married in the same week.

DICK (*shaken*). Charlotte having a baby? Are you sure?

DOROTHY. Dick, what's the matter?

DICK. Where do you keep whisky?

DOROTHY *flies to get it.*

DOROTHY. O poor Dick. I'd forgotten. Are you still in love with her?

DICK (*helping himself*). Most certainly I'm not. But when you suddenly tell me disgusting stories like that and expect me to say the usual things.

DOROTHY. *Disgusting*, Dick?—How?

DICK (*to himself rather than to her*). My God. It's monstrous. Imagine carrying spite as far as that. She's the most out-and-out destructionist I know; she's terrific. (*Almost admiringly.*)

DOROTHY. Destructionist? Do you call having a baby 'destruction'? Dick, you're ill.

DICK. What did I say? I've forgotten. Come back, whatever it was! No, Dorothy, I sincerely admire Charlotte.

DOROTHY. I don't think it's anything to admire; I just envy her. I don't understand you.

Enter DAVID (*left*).

DICK. Hullo, David, here's something Dorothy can't understand.

DAVID (*emotionally*). O Dick, dear, I *have* missed you so. Er—haven't we, Dorothy? Where have you been,

old boy? You didn't leave us your address. (*Seizes him by the shoulders.*)

DICK. In a room overlooking some roofs, with a pen, lots of paper, a big waste-paper basket; not far from here.

DOROTHY *taps* DAVID *on the shoulder with —*

DOROTHY. Hullo, darling!

They embrace; DOROTHY *affectionately*, DAVID *perfunctorily.*

DAVID. Enjoy yourself?

DICK. I didn't notice. I was too busy.

DAVID. There's stacks of letters for you; we couldn't forward them. Shall I get them?

DICK. They can wait a bit longer now they've waited so long. I didn't want them when I was working. How are you?

DAVID. Oh, I'm fine. Very fit. . . . What was it that Dorothy couldn't understand, by the way? Another medical problem?

DICK. It was about Charlotte's baby.

DAVID. What about it?

DICK. O, I was just talking, as you might say, nonsense to Dorothy. What I really meant was, how *can* reasonable people go on populating the world at this stage? What's the good of just *more* people?

DAVID. Dick's usual line of talk. His retirement from the world doesn't seem to have broadened his sympathies.

DOROTHY. Why *not* more, Dick? There's room in the world for twenty times its present population. And anyone who can afford to have a child and is healthy,

ought to. Just to make up for the breeding of the unhealthy.

DICK. A sacred duty to the species? Dorothy, do you really *like* people?

DOROTHY. Yes, I do. Lots of people.

DICK. Crowds and crowds and crowds of people? All those people? (*Includes the audience in a slow wave of the hand.*)

DOROTHY. There are such nice people in every crowd. It's extraordinary in my job how many nice people I meet in the course of a working-day.

DICK. Well, that beats me! While I've been working these last months and going out in the evening for a meal and walk, I've found myself getting quite ill just watching people go by. I can't help looking at people, I can't help looking right *into* them, and knowing all about them; and all the time I know it's useless. Nobody's ever worth looking twice at. The chances of seeing anyone worth looking twice at are several million to one. The odds are too great. And now you want more people still.

DOROTHY. What's wrong with ordinary faces? I love looking at people in buses and railway carriages and trams.

DICK. Wrong? What's *right* with them? They are simply the thousand well-known variations on the same worn animal themes — the bull theme — the weasel theme — the stoat — the bitch — the bear — the rat — the rooster — the monkey — the bull — the goat — the sheep-theme — even the man theme. I admit that one sees

magnificent specimens of he-man and she-man about still. But no proper *person*, no face to look twice at. Only types. Look here, I'll stop. I'm talking too much. I've not talked to a soul for five months, you see.

DOROTHY. Go on. I'm beginning to see what you mean.

DICK. Well, all right. It's like that with books too, nowadays. No real books — not worth looking at twice. One need only look at a single random paragraph to find the same animal authorship at once — the monkey book — the owl-book — Father's books are rooster's books — oh yes, I know! — he's got the clearest cock-o-doodle-doo you ever heard — and his midden is the oldest and fruitiest in the farm yard. But that's nothing. What's that book? (*Takes one off the side table.*) Pritchard's? Yes, he's a collie, a little Welsh collie, the slyest anywhere at weering the sheep, and penning them between the hurdles. But he's not a proper person.

DOROTHY. Who *is* a proper person? Am I? Are you? Is David?

DICK. There's never any doubt about one. Especially to himself.

DOROTHY. Were there ever any more than there are now?

DICK. I should say not. About the same number always. That's the point. They stay the same few; the others outnumber and outnumber them more and more. Did David tell you what I told him once about the bottom dropping out of things?

DOROTHY. I seem to remember something about it.

DAVID. Yes, I told her.

DICK. Well, perhaps one easy way of describing the catastrophe is to say that it was the moment when the last straw broke the back of reality, when the one unnecessary person too many was born, when population finally became unmanageable, when the proper people were finally swamped. Once they counted; now they no longer count. So it's impossible for a proper person to feel the world as a necessary world—an intelligible world in which there's any hope or fear for the future—a world worth bothering about—or, if he happens to be a poet, a world worth writing for—a world in which there's any morality left to bother about, but his own personal morality: *that* gets more and more strict, of course.

DAVID. So strict that he has no qualms about encouraging his friends and relations to murder each other. Be frank, Dick. Tell Dorothy your homicidal hopes.

DICK. Yes, Dorothy, I'm all for homicide. Of course I don't go about killing people. Not since the war. But whenever a situation's ripe for homicide, I like hearing the guns go off. In a way the war was good. There was a sort of unconscious realisation that the trouble lay in there being too many people. But it was a stupid war, it came too late, it wasn't thorough enough, and several proper people were killed in it along with the unnecessaries. And there was another thing too. . . .

DAVID (*interrupting*). Don't sidetrack me. Tell Dorothy about the revolver you put in circulation.

DICK. There's nothing to tell. Dorothy's got it safe now. Dorothy's not the person to reduce the population,

are you? You want a bigger, better, more dimpled, rosier-cheeked, fatter, ten-pounds-at-birth population.

DOROTHY. Dick. Stop at once.

DICK. Listen, Dorothy. Do you know why the population goes on increasing and increasing in spite of wars?

DOROTHY. It's obvious. People who marry want children.

DICK. And why do they want them? Fear! Fear of the species dying out, translated into smaller pettier fears of nations or families dying out. What's sex? What's sex, David?

DAVID (*mutters*). Don't ask *me*!

DICK. Sex is fear. Loneliness sometimes; that's a fear. Or dullness; that's another. Of fear of personal extinction. Say, generally, fear of death. Copopulation! The other thing I was saying about the war is just that. It wasn't destructive enough; and it was working overtime to repair the damage. Fear. Fear filled the brothels in France. Fear here in England opened an unprecedented market for the one thing that Lord Rhondda couldn't ration.

DAVID. You're exaggerating, Dick.

DICK. I'm not. Those were rabbit days. The owl—the bear—the fox—the sheep—and all the rest of the menagerie—all turned into rabbits. Godalming rabbits. An occasional lion; but all the rest rabbits.

DOROTHY. Why rabbits, Dick?

DICK. Emblem of cowardice, emblem of sexuality, emblem of prolific breeding. Copopulation!

DAVID. Well, I'm all for population. Population swells a doctor's new practice. Population demands new houses for rising architects to design.

DOROTHY. Dick, what *is* this bug you have about a terrible world-catastrophe that nobody noticed? David couldn't explain properly. Is it a joke?

DICK. It *is* a joke in a way. The way things still go on as if nothing had happened. I can't tell you about it, though, if you don't know about it yourself.

DOROTHY. Well, give an example of the change it's made. Any example. Don't hold out on us.

DICK. Well, take Time for instance. In pre-catastrophic days afterwards always came after before. Now it doesn't, necessarily, at all. Things are over before they happen, out of fashion before they are in. That's killed all sense of anticipation and climax. As for Space, that's finished too. You can go round the world from city to city now, always stopping at the same hotel. Or principles of belief. In pre-catastrophic days you either believed on principle or doubted on principle. Now there's no principle. Once you were a rebel when you were young, and a man of the world when you were middle-aged, and a conservative when you were old. Now there's nothing to rebel against or be conservative about. Or any real world to be a man of.

DAVID. Rot, Dick.

God is neither dead nor sick
He may amend all yet.

DICK. Not dead?

DAVID. I'm building a new church with an electric organ and tip-up seats — wired for Talkies.

DICK. They told me in Ireland that He'd been shot by the Black and Tans — resisting arrest — back in 1920.

DOROTHY (*furious*). Dick! You're either mad or very wicked. Stop talking like that or leave this house!

DICK. Sorry, Dorothy. I forgot you were religious. Put it down to the war. They say I've never been the same since my head-wound.

DOROTHY (*softening*). Is it only since the war that you can't stand crowds? It's a common complaint among ex-soldiers. Agoraphobia, we doctors call it.

DICK. That's a good word. Agoraphobia. If it were a horse I'd have five bob on it each way.

DOROTHY. You're sorry?

DICK. I didn't mean to upset you, Dorothy.

DOROTHY. Dick, dear, tell me: why are you such a rebel?

DICK. Me a rebel? That makes me laugh. A rebel is someone with a grudge against the community he belongs to. I've no grudge any more. I'm simply quit, after a long enough period of conventional usefulness. If this were India there'd be no need to labour the point: it would be enough to announce, 'Ex-captain babu Richard Tompion, B.A., Oxon., has retired from the so-called world to live a life of seclusion and meditation. . . .'

DAVID. He has found a dry cave in the hills where he dwells in verminous simplicity, and the local inhabitants, recognising his holiness and overjoyed at the honour of

his presence, daily fill his wooden bowl with tamarind, rice and ghee. No flowers or letters by request.

DICK. Yes, that's right, David: only this isn't India. You see, Dorothy, a rebel's someone who wants to reform things. I don't. I read in the paper the other day that the chairman of an Urban Railway Company had decided against putting a safety-locking gadget on the carriage doors. He said that only forty-one more people had fallen out on the line while the train was in motion than last year. So it wasn't economically worth while to undertake the heavy expense. If I'd been a rebel I'd have simply boiled with rage at this insult to the community. As it was, I just guffawed. *I* don't care now how many people fall out of trains or what happens to railway dividends.

DOROTHY. Dick, dear. Be serious for once. Honestly; aren't little babies sweet? Aren't they dear little things? You can't think of a baby as population, can you? *Can* he, David?

CURTAIN.

SCENE 2

The same room. Two months later. Curtains drawn. Lamps burning. Late in the evening.

JANE *restless, picking up a paper, throwing it down, going across to look at the clock. It is ten o'clock. There is a knock at the front door (off). She pulls back the curtain to see who it is, then goes out (left), and comes back with* DICK.

DICK. What are *you* doing here, Jane? Dorothy in?

JANE. No, I'm waiting for her. Been here some time. Dorothy hasn't anyone to answer the door at night. (The maid sleeps out.) I found the side-door open.

DICK. Lucky to find you here. I wouldn't have thought of a side door. And it's started to snow.

JANE. I do wish she'd come.

DICK. Something wrong?

JANE. I want to talk to her about Charlotte. You don't mind me mentioning Charlotte, do you? I know you've not seen her since she married; but, Dick, I'm so worried and anxious. She's nearly six months gone now, and won't let a doctor examine her to see if everything's all right. She ought to have gone to a good one months ago. And she won't make reservations ahead in a decent nursing home, or even engage a trained-nurse in advance. She says she'll leave it to the local midwife and the family doctor, and she's not going to worry until it starts happening. The family doctor's no earthly use anyhow, and she knows it.

DICK. Can't the proud prospective father control her?

JANE. Dick, don't you realise how she *loathes* that man? (I know he's your father.) I don't blame her: he's *awful*. I simply can't make out why she married him.

DICK. Has she told you that she loathes him?

JANE. No, Charlotte wouldn't tell a soul. Not even me. And yet the funny thing is, the more really utterly loathsome he is the more she smiles, as if at a joke of her own, and seems to mind him less than when he's being just *rather* loathsome.

DICK. What do you call being really utterly loathsome?

JANE. When he kisses her and calls her his little wife in public to make his stinking literary friends jealous. Or, say, when he talks of the baby as *him*, and says he'll put him down for Harrow the day he's born.

DICK. Harrow? Why Harrow?

JANE. Instead of Eton. More democratic tone, he says. That's how he behaves.

DICK. I believe you: he couldn't afford to send me to a big Public School. (That was in his struggling days.) And now he thinks that that's what's wrong with me, chiefly. He wants to start his new family right this time; and as soon as possible.

JANE. Well, I hope it's a girl! But, Dick, seriously, I *am* so anxious. She's done nothing about buying baby clothes, or anything else. Most women do that as soon as they're sure they're having one. She just sits about and writes letters all day.

DICK. What sort of letters?

JANE. You know me. I'd read over *anyone's* shoulder. I sneaked a look at one of these. They're letters to *you*, Dick.

DICK. I never got any. What are they? Unposted love letters?

She nods.

JANE. O, Dick, what possessed her to marry your dreadful father?

DICK. To spite me. I refused to marry her because — well, she had physical difficulties with men and . . .

JANE. But she married your father all right. And she's having a child.

DICK. That proves nothing. Jane, I don't want to discuss my father's married life any more. It's obscene.

JANE. God, neither do I. Only: the one letter of Charlotte to you that I saw didn't seem to show that she had any difficulty in thinking about you physically.

DICK. Jane, understand this: I'm *through* with Charlotte. I shouldn't have let you talk as much as you did.

JANE. If you're really through what does it matter what I say?

DICK. Oh, if we're just telling each other stories to pass the time till Dorothy turns up, all right. There's a good one about Mrs. Behrens. Did Charlotte tell you that one? She must know it.

JANE. She tells me nothing these days. Let's have it.

DICK. Well, you saw her that day on the tennis-court, so I needn't describe her. She and father had an affair while my mother was still alive. I think little Elizabetta was an interviewer for the illustrated papers then. My mother didn't like my father's books; she knew they were punk and of course she refused to treat him as a genius. She was good. She wouldn't give an inch to humour his conceit and she never came with him to literary lunches and banquets because she knew how he'd behave. Mrs. Behrens, on the contrary, simply slobbered over him.

JANE. Did your mother mind?

DICK. Mother mind? No. I tell you, mother was *good*. She told me one day quite casually, that anyone who could play about with Mrs. Behrens wasn't worth a

moment's regret. When mother died, he wanted to marry the little bitch. But Dorothy wouldn't let him. She never forgave the insult to mother; funny, because mother herself didn't mind. But Dorothy's like that. In some ways she's rather like her father, I'm afraid. Well, he kept her on until last September when Charlotte said she'd marry him — to spite me. That was easy. Charlotte — well — you heard the way she played up to him, and he fell for her at once — principally because he knew that I'd wanted her; it was his supreme chance of humiliating me, he thought.

JANE. Didn't he care for her?

DICK. While she flattered him. As soon as she turned nasty, of course, he tried to get back to his Elizabetta. I heard about it from Pritchard.

JANE. Tell me that part, do.

DICK. The joke is that Charlotte and I had originally palmed Mrs. Behrens off on Pritchard — oh, by the way, I forgot — after I first met her, she wrote me three incestuous (technically incestuous) letters. Well, anyhow, Pritchard had his revenge on his rival at last when he came calling. (*Imitates* PRITCHARD'S *accent.*) "You damned dirty fellow, go back home to your wife! Nobody wants you here.' Then he hit him biff! in the belly and pushed him out of the door. Mrs. Behrens laughed till the tears came; or so Pritchard told me. Collapse of elderly suitor!

JANE. Oh, haven't we got lovely parents! Mine were rotten, both of them. Only perhaps a bit worse, because they were musicians. Dirtier. Charlotte never recovered from them. I did. That's why I'm like I am. . . .

DICK. I'll tell you what's wrong with my father. He's a period poet, and he's chosen a damned bad period.

JANE. Yes, he's a belated Tennyson who hasn't been able to improve on Tennyson and so would like to be a Byron. But he's ashamed to be a Byron openly, because he's a Tennyson.

DICK. That's right. And he's always looking out for a respectable Missolonghi to lie down in and die.

JANE. I wish to God he'd hurry up and find one. . . . Dick!

DICK. What?

JANE. O, Dick. I do *hate* people, don't you? That day I held that revolver it was all I could do not to kill off that *stupid* Dorothy and that *dreadful* father of yours and that *hopeless* and *bloody* David. Just to make a little breathing-space. Everyone except you and Charlotte, in fact.

DICK. Do you know, Jane, you're the first sensible person I've talked to for weeks.

JANE. And it seemed so anxious to go off, so intelligent. I'm all for revolvers.

Enter DOROTHY; *she is in furs, and in a state of collapse.*

DOROTHY. *You*, Dick? I saw a light. I was afraid it might be . . . someone else. How did you get in?

DICK. Hullo, Dorothy. You look bad! What's wrong? Jane let me in. Apparently you left the side door open.

DOROTHY. Oh, is Jane here too?

(DICK *has been sitting by a reading-lamp.* JANE *is half-*

hidden from DOROTHY, *in a big arm-chair in the shadow.*)

I'm in terrible trouble, Dick.

DICK. Jane's all right, Dorothy. We're here to help you.

JANE. Something happened to David?

(DOROTHY *nods.*)

Here, have a drink! (*She pours it out.*) Tell us!

DOROTHY (*in a small, childish voice*). Well, you see. I was wrong about David. I mean about his dishonesty being charming. Remember I told you about his little charming dishonesties?

JANE. He's been unfaithful?

DOROTHY (*with almost a laugh*). I don't think you'd call it *unfaithful*, not in a divorce court. I wouldn't have minded *that* so much. But when he was pretending to be working at his office at night, he was doing things so disgusting and so horrible—things I didn't know *existed* —that I couldn't understand at first what it was about; I mean I was so angry I didn't know *what* to think. I took him out for a walk on the Heath and when we came to the part where the football grounds are, I asked him. I showed him the pocket-book I'd found in which all the . . . all the letters were. I threw it in his face.

JANE. Good for you, Dorothy. What did he do then?

DOROTHY. . . . He told me all about it; with all the defiance and beastliness of a filthy dishonest person when he's cornered. He just *triumphed* in his filth. So . . .

DICK. So . . .

JANE. Well?

DOROTHY. So I shot him with this. (*Shows the revolver.*)

DICK. Killed him?

DOROTHY (*again with a half-laugh*). I'm a doctor. I know where to kill people.

JANE. My God, Dorothy! You've got guts. Meet anyone? Anyone about?

DOROTHY. Not a soul.

DICK. Leave any tracks?

DOROTHY. It was hard ground, frozen mud, near some goal posts. And it had just started snowing then. It's snowing hard now. I came back a roundabout way.

DICK. What time was it?

DOROTHY. What's the time now? Nearly a quarter-past ten? Say, a quarter-to.

JANE. Dick and I have been here with you since eight o'clock. They'll be able to work out that he was killed just after the snow started, by the amount of snow under the pocket book and on his boots. You left it there?

DOROTHY *nods.*

DOROTHY. You aren't going to tell?

JANE. Don't be a fool, Dorothy. Have another drink!

DICK. Had he any money on him?

DOROTHY. No; I know, because he took it out from his pockets when he changed for dinner and left it in his dressing-room. I found the pocket-book with it.

DICK. Fine! Motive, robbery. Now, Dorothy, do you think you can 'phone the Anstruthers with a message for David?

DOROTHY (*brightening up*). My voice is all right, I think.

DICK. Say that he went out just before the snow began, when we were all here, and that he told you and me and Jane that he was going there to borrow a book. What book?

DOROTHY. Pritchard's poems. I lent my copy to Lady Anstruther weeks ago. He wanted it back to show you. How's that?

DICK. That's fine. Well, then, say he's not to hurry back if he's there, but wait till it stops snowing. Say that Jane and I will excuse him.

JANE. No, *I'll* ring up first and say hullo to Lilian Anstruther. That'll make a cast-iron alibi. I'll take the revolver, Dorothy.

DICK. No, Jane. You're too enthusiastic. It's come back to *me*, now.

JANE (*crosses to the 'phone*). What's the Anstruthers' number, Dorothy? (*Telephone bell rings.*) Damn. Someone else on the line. (*At 'phone.*) Hullo. Hullo. Yes, this is Doctor Dorothy Casselis' house. Oh. You, Denman, is it? Miss Jane speaking. . . . O God, Denman. Has she? Hang on a moment. (*To* DOROTHY *and* DAVID.) Everything's happening at once. Charlotte's had a fall. Your bloody father's lost his head; it's Denman speaking. Yes, she's bad. Lots of things broken apparently, and the baby's started; it wasn't killed. Here, Dick, take the 'phone: I can't.

DOROTHY. And now . . . *Charlotte*!

DICK. Pull yourself together, old girl. (*At 'phone.*)

Hullo, Denman. Dick Tompion speaking. Yes, Dr. Casselis is here. She'll come right away. If my father goes on like that slug him with a sandbag. Yes, with my authority. Fine. That's the spirit, Denman. Yes, they'll both come in her car. (*Rings off.*) And now that Anstruther call. Can you manage it, you two?

JANE (*recovering*). What did you say their number was, Dorothy?

CURTAIN.

SCENE 3

DICK'S *bed and work-room. Three days later. Night. A big table spread neatly with his papers, chiefly foolscap* (*central*). *A plain wooden bookcase with a few books* (*central back*), *next to window. A smaller writing-table* (*left*). *A couch, and a door leading to bath-room* (*right*).

It is a large room with whitewashed walls; no pictures. The furniture does not suggest poverty, only extreme fastidiousness in cutting out unessentials. No washing-appliances or clothes visible. The window curtains are heavy and of biscuit-colour. They reach to the floor. The only colours in the room are plain —a blue bed-spread, for instance. There is a plain wooden reading-lamp at the smaller table and a big light in the centre of the room; a jug of flowers in the middle of the bigger table is the only ornament.

DICK *is sitting at the smaller writing-table, left of the stage, facing the wings. He takes the revolver from the desk drawer,*

ejects the cartridges, glances at the empty cartridge-case, puts it on his finger and wiggles it about; smiles, puts it in his pocket. Gets out the cleaning brush and cleans the barrel.

A knock.

DICK. One moment—who is it?

JANE. Me, Dick. I'm alone.

DICK. Hullo, Jane. Yes, come in. Shut the door. I was cleaning this revolver. Should have done it before, but I've been busy writing again, and interviewing those damned police. They seem to suspect Dorothy. But let them. The alibi's good enough.

JANE. She's not given away anything?

DICK. Not yet. But Dorothy's so damned truthful that I'm a bit anxious. I wish we had someone to hang the murder on.

JANE. Reloading, Dick?

DICK. Yes. Do you want to go gunning with it?

JANE (*shudders*). No, Dick. Charlotte's dying cured me of that for a bit. Shook my nerve. . . . Dick!

DICK. Yes?

JANE. Dick, it wasn't an accident, Charlotte's fall?

DICK. People like Charlotte don't have accidents. She threw herself over the banisters all right.

JANE. Dick.

DICK. What?

JANE. It was an *awful* death.

DICK (*does not look at her*). Tell me, if it'll make you feel better.

JANE. Well, the screaming. The pain must have been absolutely unthinkable. And you know how sensitive Charlotte was; even to cut her finger knocked her out. Imagine thirty-six hours of that, with the broken ribs and leg. They couldn't give her morphia all the time, because of the baby; O Dick, Dorothy was marvellous. I *do* admire Dorothy. I mean, stupid as hell, but what guts when she's got a job on! She's like you, then.

DICK. When Dorothy's good, she's very good.

JANE. The damned old G.P.! He oughtn't to be practising. He's about ninety and hasn't read any new medical stuff since he qualified in the year Dot. Sort of man who always carries about a little bottle full of live leeches and a rusty cupping-knife. He'd lost his head, and had your father carry her up to her bed just bundled anyhow instead of on a stretcher. While the old swine was fussing about trying to put the leg in splints, your father rang up a Mental Healer. And the Mental Healer came and sat in a corner of the bedroom with a book and her eyes shut, praying. Charlotte screamed for her to go away. But your father insisted on her staying. Then Denman had the sense to 'phone Dorothy. Dorothy didn't give a damn for etiquette. She threw everything out of the room and took charge. . . . Of course, Charlotte hadn't a chance. But Dorothy saved the baby, of course.

DICK (*bitterly*). Dorothy would!

JANE. I stayed to run the house; your father was useless.

You wouldn't believe it, but he made violent love to me while Charlotte was dying.

DICK. That was helpful.

JANE. And your brother Bob was there, too; to make things worse.

DICK. Bob! He was supposed to be cut off with a shilling. What was *he* doing there?

JANE. Your father suddenly got religious and called him up to cry over him and forgive him, and put him back in his will. Why didn't he call you in too while he was about it? To make the sobbing party complete?

DICK. You see, I never let fly at him like Bob did. Bob's old-fashioned; he's one of these rebels. I never did my father the honour of rebelling against him. That's why he hates me. Bob's done him two good turns now — first given him the dramatic satisfaction of cutting him off, now given him the dramatic satisfaction of forgiveness.

JANE. And a third one. Listen. Bob was all unsettled by Charlotte's screams and only stayed in the house because your father made him. Anyhow, to pass the time he started making violent love to me, too. And your father came in just as I'd slapped Bob's face, and there was a fight. Bob threw a chair. And your father threw a decanter.

DICK. Lively doings. What was the next turn?

JANE. Dorothy came down and gave them both hell. Bob went.

DICK. Pain and fear. I told Dorothy the other day about that. They look for an outlet. Religion first. If religion isn't good enough, then sex. But, Jane, you know

you attracted it in those two. Because of the pain and fear; unconsciously.

JANE. Did I? I didn't think of it that way. You're not blaming me? You don't hate me?

DICK. No. Indeed I don't, at this moment.

JANE. And one more thing. The same night—last night it must have been—one loses count——

DICK. Keep that for later. I can hear the family coming up the staircase.

JANE. Oh, I can't meet them. Let me go into the bathroom and hide. (*Makes for the bathroom door.*)

DICK. No, someone might want to use it. Behind those curtains.

She hides.

A loud knock and the door is flung open. TOMPION *standing in the doorway with his jaw thrust forward and a horse-whip in his hand. He has a mourning band on his overcoat sleeve.* DOROTHY *is behind him.*

TOMPION (*solemnly and thickly*). Dick.

DICK (*mimicking the dutiful son*). Sir!

TOMPION. Dick, have you no shame?

DICK. Dorothy, have you noticed what our parent's got in his hand. A real antique horse-whip. If you have any influence on our hard-riding friend please warn him that he mustn't involve me in his old-world dramas. Tell him that when I fight I fight dirty.

TOMPION. Dirty, yes. Do you know the word *sportsmanship*, Dick?

DICK. Yes. Originally popularised I believe by the

late Marquess of Queensberry. Now the last dirty word used on Saturday nights in the pubs before the fun starts. (*In Cockney scorn.*) 'Aaow! Sportsmanship!'

TOMPION. 'Shame.' 'Sportsmanship.' Do any of your generation know the words?

DICK. I won't answer for all my generation. Some of them are really hang-overs from yours. No, *I* haven't any shame, if you mean *me*.

TOMPION. I have brought your sister here to tell you in her presence what I have discovered.

DOROTHY. Father, what *is* all this nonsense about? What has Dick done?

TOMPION. Dorothy. You know that my wife, when she was dying, called for your brother, but refused to speak to me?

DOROTHY. Well, I 'phoned Dick, but he wasn't about.

DICK. At police-headquarters, probably. Not that I'd have come.

TOMPION. Never mind that. Do you know what she wanted to say?

DOROTHY. No, how should I?

TOMPION. Read these letters from her to your brother. They were in her desk. (*Hands them to* DOROTHY.) (*To* DICK) Do you know what she told me before she died.

DICK. I wish I'd heard it.

TOMPION. That she threw herself over those banisters because of you. Because it was *your* child. That she only married me because you had seduced her, and hadn't the

pluck to face the consequences. And that even after the marriage. . . .

DICK. God, Dorothy! I do admire Charlotte. A fighter to the last. And how she must have hated him!

TOMPION. Then you acknowledge it? (*Raising his whip.*)

DOROTHY. O, Dick, do deny it. It can't be true?

DICK. What the devil would it matter, anyway, *who* the father of the child was. It's been born, hasn't it? Charlotte's dead, isn't she?

TOMPION (*suddenly sees the revolver, picks it up, dropping the whip, and points it at* DICK). Do you deny it?

DICK. Put that gun down, or I'll hit you.

TOMPION. I'll give you three to deny it. One, two . . .

JANE *suddenly darts from behind the curtains and stands between* DICK *and the revolver.*

JANE. Hullo, Dorothy. Hullo, Dick, Oh . . . (*Pretending surprise.*) Hullo, Mr. Tompion!

TOMPION (*taken aback*). Oh! Jane! (*He puts the revolver down on the corner of the table.*)

JANE. Speaking of shameless generations! Do you know that last night, about three hours after Charlotte died, this disgusting old satyr came into my bedroom and tried to play? I gallantly defended my honour with a brass candle-stick. (*Knocks up his hat and shows a bruise.*) I got in a good one, too.

DOROTHY. Father! Daddy! You! Jane, you're lying!

TOMPION. It's a conspiracy.

DICK *looks steadfastly at him.*

DICK. Are you sure?

TOMPION (*does not answer. There is silence for some moments. Then he picks up the revolver*). Is that the way to the bathroom?

DICK. Yes, hot, cold and a shower.

JANE. Try the shower!

TOMPION *walks resolutely into the bathroom.*

DOROTHY (*laughs nervously*). Oh, Jane, what's he going to do? Gargle? Jane, it *was* a lie, wasn't it?

JANE. No. He's not a very nice little fellow, your father.

A shot from the bathroom.

DICK. Well, that's that!

DOROTHY *rushes to the bathroom, looks in, bends down. Returns slowly.*

DOROTHY. Dead.

DICK (*at the telephone*). Put me through to the Police, please. At once. No, I forget the number. . . . Thanks. Hullo. Police Headquarters? My name's Tompion, Richard Tompion. I want Superintendent Bevans. . . . Thanks. . . . (*Speaking leisurely.*) O, Superintendent Bevans. About Mr. David Casselis' death. Yes, Richard Tompion, the brother-in-law. You questioned me yesterday afternoon. Well, we know the murderer now. . . . My father, Mr. Cecil Tompion, the well-known poet and novelist. He's just confessed to my sister, myself, and a friend. Here, hang on. No hurry. I want to tell you. Yes, his wife died yesterday and that shook him, and he confessed. He shot Casselis for his daughter's honour — you know! that pocket-book you showed me, all that

unfortunate business; apparently he'd found out about it. No, no good arresting him. Yes. . . . He's just committed suicide in my bathroom. Here, hang on, no hurry. Yes, I'll give you the address in a moment. I want to tell you. I don't wonder you suspected my sister. She pretended she didn't know about the pocket-book. My fault. I advised her to deny it. Still, the alibi was all right.

Yes, with a revolver. The same one that killed Casselis —a Webley.

Address: flat 35. Avis Buildings. . . . Yes, that's the place. Come along, we won't touch anything. Good-bye. . . . Don't mention it. (*Hangs up.*) Oh, Dorothy, here's the cleaning-rod and the first cartridge-case and the rest of the cartridges. Plant them in the library—got your car?—and come back here.

DOROTHY (*putting them in her bag*). O, Dick, I'm so relieved and happy. I'm actually *pleased* he's dead. Isn't that awful?

DICK. Happy, are you? What's that? *Happy?*

DOROTHY. I've got Charlotte's baby to look after. Instead of him—(*Points at the bathroom*) having her. Jane, dear, may I have Charlotte's baby for my very own? O, please say I may?

JANE. Why, of course, Dorothy. You've earned her.

DICK (*mockingly*). And you'll bring her up as a good Christian, and send her to an expensive school and shield her from the world? Promise me, Dorothy!

DOROTHY. Oh, Dick, she's so sweet. So *ridiculously* like Charlotte.

DICK. Here, hurry off with those things.

(*Exit* DOROTHY.)

(*A pause.*)

The extraordinary thing is that it still goes on. (*Makes a circling gesture.*) *And* on. *And* on.

JANE. Oh, Dick, I'm so frightened. Dick, give me a kiss. Before the police come. (*Holds out her arms to him.*)

DICK *appears not to hear her. He still circles with his hand.*

CURTAIN.

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